



POEMS



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JOHN RUSKIN



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The Old Water Wheel

POEMS

BY

JOHN RUSKIN.

COLLECTED AND EDITED BY

JAMES OSBORNE WRIGHT.

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PREFACE.

THE poems collected in the following pages have been printed from the original published copies, great care having been taken to follow the author's text, with the exception of certain needed changes in the orthography.

It must be remembered that all of Ruskin's verse-making was confined to his youthful days, and was for the most part dated from Christ Church, Oxford, over the initials J. R. The first poem, "Saltzburg," was written in the author's sixteenth year, the last "The Glacier" but eleven years later. "The Broken Chain" was appropriately published at intervals—the first two parts appearing in 1840, the third in 1841, the fourth in 1842, and the fifth and last part in the year following.

All of these poems, with the exception of "Salsette and Elephanta," were published in the *Annuals* so popular during England's golden-age of steel engraving, but no collection was made until 1850, when the author issued a privately

printed edition, of such limited number, that copies have become virtually inaccessible except to the most rabid bibliomaniac, whose heavy purse enables him to successfully outbid competitors in the auction room and bookstore.*

To those who appreciate the intense personality of the author, these verses will afford much insight into his character. The weird and somewhat melancholy train of thought which pervades all of his poetry is certainly remarkable, when we consider that it was written at an age that is popularly supposed to be under the influence of rose-colored visions rather than the grim churchyard aspect which pervades every line of these metrical effusions of the autocratic art-critic.

* Two years ago a copy sold by auction, in London, for 41 guineas.

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SALTZBURG.

ON Salza's quiet tide the westering sun
Gleams mildly ; and the lengthening shadows dun,
Chequered with ruddy streaks from spire and roof,
Begm to weave fair twilight's mystic woof,
Till the dim tissue, like a gorgeous veil,
Wraps the proud city, in her beauty pale.
A minute since, and in the rosy light
Dome, casement, spire, were glowing warm and bright ;
A minute since, St. Rupert's stately shrine,
Rich with the spoils of many a Hartzwald mine,*
Flung back the golden glow ; now, broad and vast,
The shadows from yon ancient fortress cast,

* The dome of the Cathedral of St. Hubert is covered with copper ; and there are many altars and shrines in the interior constructed of different sorts of marble, brought from quarries in the vicinity. St. Hubert, to whom the Cathedral is dedicated, was by birth a Scotchman.

Like the dark grasp of some barbaric power,
Their leaden empire stretch o'er roof and tower.

Sweet is the twilight hour by Salza's strand,
Though no Arcadian visions grace the land :
Wakes not a sound that floats not sweetly by,
While day's last beams upon the landscape die ;
Low chants the fisher where the waters pour,
And murmuring voices melt along the shore ;
The splash of waves comes softly from the side
Of passing barge slow gliding o'er the tide ;
And there are sounds from city, field, and hill,
Shore, forest, flood ; yet mellow all and still.

But change we now the scene, ere night descend,
And through St. Rupert's massive portal wend.
Full many a shrine, bedeckt with sculpture quaint
Of steel-clad knight and legendary saint ;
Full many an altar, where the incense-cloud
Rose with the pealing anthem, deep and loud ;

And pavements worn before each marble fane
By knees devout—(ah ! bent not all in vain !)
There greet the gaze ; with statues, richly wrought,
And noble paintings, from Ausonia brought,—
Planned by those master minds whose memory stands
The grace, the glory, of their native lands.
As the hard granite, 'midst some softer stone,
Starts from the mass, unbuttressed and alone,
And proudly rears its iron strength for aye,
While crumbling crags around it melt away ;
So midst the ruins of long eras gone,
Creative Genius holds his silent throne,—
While lesser lights grow dim,—august, sublime,
Gigantic looming o'er the gulfs of Time !

FRAGMENTS

FROM A METRICAL JOURNAL.

Andernacht.

TWILIGHT'S mists are gathering grey
Round us on our winding way ;
Yet the mountain's purple crest
Reflects the glories of the west.
Rushing on with giant force,
Rolls the Rhine his glorious course ;
Flashing, now, with flamy red,
O'er his jagg'd basaltic bed ;
Now, with current calm and wide,
Sweeping round the mountain's side ;
Ever noble, proud, and free,
Flowing in his majesty.
Soon upon the evening skies
Andernacht's grim ruins rise ;

Buttress, battlement and tower,
Remnants hoar of Roman power.
Monuments of Cæsar's sway,
Piecemeal mouldering away.
Lo, together loosely thrown,
Sculptured head and lettered stone ;
Guardless now the arch-way steep
To rampart huge and frowning keep ;
The empty moat is gay with flowers,
The night-wind whistles through the towers,
And, flapping in the silent air,
The owl and bat are tenants there.

St. Goar.

Past a rock with frowning front,
Wrinkled by the tempest's brunt,
By the Rhine we downward bore
Upon the village of St. Goar.
Bosomed deep among the hills,
Here old Rhine his current stills.

Loitering the banks between,
As if, enamored of the scene,
He had forgot his onward way
For a live-long summer day.
Grim the crags through whose dark cleft,
Behind, he hath a passage left ;
While, gaunt as gorge of hunted boar,
Dark yawns the foaming pass before,
Where the tormented waters rage,
Like demons in their Stygian cage,
In giddy eddies whirling round
With a sullen choking sound ;
Or flinging far the scattering spray,
O'er the peaked rocks that bar his way.
—No marvel that the spell-bound Rhine,
Like giant overcome with wine,
Should *here* relax his angry frown,
And, soothed to slumber, lay him down
Amid the vine-clad banks that lave,
Their tresses in his placid wave.

THE MONTHS.

I.

FROM your high dwellings in the realms of snow

And cloud, where many an avalanche's fall

Is heard resounding from the mountain's brow,

Come, ye cold winds, at January's call,

On whistling wings, and with white flakes bestrew

The earth, till February's reign restore

The race of torrents to their wonted flow,

Whose waves shall stand in silent ice no more ;

But, lashed by March's maddened winds, shall roar

With voice of ire, and beat the rocks on every shore.

II.

Bow down your heads, ye flowers in gentle guise,

Before the dewy rain that April sheds,

Whose sun shines through her clouds with quick surprise.

Shedding soft influences on your heads ;

And wreath ye round the rosy month that flies
To scatter perfumes in the path of June ;
Till July's sun upon the mountains rise
Triumphant, and the wan and weary moon
Mingle her cold beams with the burning lume
That Sirius shoots through all the dreary midnight gloom.

III.

Rejoice ! ye fields, rejoice ! and wave with gold,
When August round her precious gifts is flinging;
Lo ! the crushed wain is slowly homeward rolled:
The sunburnt reapers jocund lays are singing;
September's steps her juicy stores unfold,
If the Spring blossoms have not blushed in vain:
October's foliage yellows with his cold:
In rattling showers dark November's rain,
From every stormy cloud, descends amain,
Till keen December's snows close up the year again

THE LAST SMILE.

SHE sat beside me yesternight,
With lip, and eye, so blandly smiling
So full of soul, of life, of light,
So sweetly my lorn heart beguiling,
That she had almost made me gay—
Had almost charmed the thought away—
(Which, like the poisoned desert wind,
Came sick and heavy o'er my mind)—
That memory soon mine all would be,
And she would smile no more for me.

SONG.

[From Leoni, a Romance of Italy.]

FULL, broad, and bright, is the silver light
Of moon and stars on flood and fell;
But in my breast is starless night,
For I am come to say farewell.
How glad, how swift, was wont to be
The step that bore me back to thee;
Now coldly comes upon my heart
The meeting that is but to part.

I do not ask a tear, but while
I linger where I must not stay,
Oh, give me but a parting smile,
To light me on my lonely way.
To shine a brilliant beacon star,
To my reverted glance, afar,
Through midnight, which can have no morrow,
O'er the deep, silent, surge of sorrow.

SPRING.

INFANT Spirit of the Spring !
On thy fresh-plumed pinion, bring
Snow-drops like thy stainless brow—
Violet, primrose—cull them now,
With the cup of daffodil,
Which the fairies love to fill,
Ere each moon-dance they renew,
With the fragrant honey dew ;
Bring them, Spirit !—bring them hither
Ere the wind have time to wither ;
Or the sun to steal their dyes,
To paint, at eve, the western skies.
Bring them for the wreath of one—
Fairest, best, that Time hath known.

Infant Spirit ! dreams have told
Of thy golden hours of old,

When the amaranth was flung
O'er creation bright and young ;
When the wind had sweeter sound
Than holiest lute-string since hath found ;

When the sigh of angels sent
Fragrance through the firmament :
Then thy glorious gifts were shed
O'er full many a virgin head :
Of those forms of beauty, none
Gladden now this earth, save one !
Hither, then, thy blossoms bring,
Infant Spirit of the Spring !

THE SCYTHIAN GRAVE.

THE following stanzas refer to some peculiar and affecting customs of the Scythians, as avouched by Herodotus (Melpomene 71), relative to the burial of their kings,* round whose tombs they were wont to set up a troop of fifty skeleton scarecrows—armed corpses—in a manner very horrible, barbarous and indecorous ; besides sending out of the world to keep the king company, numerous cup-bearers, grooms, lackeys, coachmen, and cooks ; all which singular, and, to the individuals concerned, somewhat objectionable proceedings appear to have been the result of a feeling, pervading the whole nation, of the poetical and picturesque.

I.

THEY laid the lord
Of all the land
Within his grave of pride ;
They set the sword
Beside the hand
That could not grasp nor guide ;

* These are the kings to whom the prophecies in the Old Testament refer :—"They shall go down to the grave with their weapons of war, though they were a terror to the mighty in the land of the living."

They left to soothe and share his rest
Beneath the moveless mould,
A lady, bright as those that live,
But oh ! how calm and cold !
They left to keep due watch and ward,
Thick vassals round their slumbering lord—
Ranged in menial order all—
They may hear, when *he* can call.

II.

They built a mound
Above the breast
Whose haughty heart was still ;
Each stormy sound
That wakes the west,
Howls o'er that lonely hill.
Underneath an armed troop
In stalwart order stay ;
Flank to flank they stand, nor stoop
Their lances, day by day,

Round the dim sepulchral cliff
Horsemen fifty, fixed and stiff—
Each with his bow, and each with his brand,
With his bridle grasped in his steadfast hand.

III.

The soul of sleep
May dim the brow,
And check the soldier's tread,
But who can keep
A guard so true,
As do the dark-eyed dead ?
The foul hyena's howl and haunt
About their charnel lair ;
The flickering rags of flesh they flaunt
Within the plague-struck air.
But still the skulls do gaze and grin,
Though the worms have gnawed the nerves within,
And the jointed toes, and the fleshless heel
Clatter and clank in their stirrup of steel.

IV.

The snows are swift,
That glide so pale
Along the mountain dim ;
Beneath their drift
Shall rust the mail,
And blanch the nerveless limb :
While shower on shower, and wreath on wreath,
From vapours thunder-scarred,*
Surround the misty mound of death
And whelm its ghastly guard ;
Till those who held the earth in fear,
Lie meek, and mild, and powerless here,
Without a single sworded slave
To keep their name, or guard their grave.

* It is one of the peculiarities of the climate, according to Herodotus, that it thunders in the winter, not in the summer.

REMEMBRANCE.

I OUGHT to be joyful, the jest and the song
And the light tones of music resound through the throng ;
But its cadence falls dully and dead on my ear,
And the laughter I mimic is quenched in a tear.

For here are no longer, to bid me rejoice,
The light of thy smile, or the tone of thy voice,
And, gay though the crowd that's around me may be,
I am alone, when I'm parted from thee.

Alone, said I, dearest ? O, never we part,—
For ever, for ever, thou'rt here in my heart :
Sleeping or waking, where'er I may be,
I have but one thought, and that thought is of thee.

When the planets roll red through the darkness of night,
When the morning bedews all the landscape with light,
When the high sun of noon-day is warm on the hill,
And the breezes are quiet, the green leafage still ;

I love to look out o'er the earth and the sky,
For nature is kind, and seems lonely as I ;
Whatever in nature most lovely I see,
Has a voice that recalls the remembrance of thee.

Remember—remember. Those only can know
How dear is remembrance, whose hope is laid low ;
'Tis like clouds in the west, that are gorgeous still,
When the dank dews of evening fall deadly and chill.

Like the bow in the cloud that is painted so bright,—
Like the voice of the nightingale, heard through the night,
Oh, sweet is remembrance, most sad though it be,
For remembrance is all that remaineth for me.

CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD.

NIGHT.

FAINT from the bell the ghastly echoes fall,
That grates within the gray cathedral tower ;
Let me not enter through the portal tall,
Lest the strange spirit of the moonless hour
Should give a life to those pale people, who
Lie in their fretted niches, two and two,
Each with his head on pillowy stone reposed,
And his hands lifted, and his eyelids closed.

From many a mouldering oriel, as to flout,
Its pale, grave brow of ivy-tressed stone,
Comes the incongruous laugh, and revel shout—
Above, some solitary casement, thrown
Wide open to the wavering night wind,
Admits its chill, so deathful, yet so kind,

Unto the fevered brow and fiery eye
Of one, whose night hour passeth sleeplessly.

Ye melancholy chambers ! I could shun
The darkness of your silence, with such fear,
As places where slow murder had been done.
How many noble spirits have died here,
Withering away in yearnings to aspire,
Gnawed by mocked hope—devoured by their own fire !
Methinks the grave must feel a colder bed
To spirits such as these, than unto common dead.

ARISTODEMUS AT PLATÆA.

[OF two Spartans who were prevented by illness from taking part in the battle of Thérmostylæ, and who were, in consequence, degraded to the level of helots, one, unable to endure the scorn of his countrymen, killed himself ; the other, by name Aristodemus, waited, and when, at the battle of Plataea, thirty-three thousand allied Greeks stood to receive the final and desperate attack of three hundred thousand chosen Asiatics, and the Spartans, unused to Persian arms, hung slightly back, he charged alone, and, calling to his countrymen to "follow the coward," broke the enemy's mass, and was found, when the victorious Greeks who followed him had laid two hundred thousand of their enemy dead on the field, lying on a low hillock, with his face turned up to heaven, a group of the Persian nobles lying slaughtered around him. He was refused the honors of burial, because, it was said, he was only courageous in despair.]

YE have darkened mine honor and branded my name,
Ye have quenched its remembrance in silence and shame.
Yet the heart ye call craven, unbroken, hath borne
The voice of your anger, the glance of your scorn.

But the life that hath lingered is now in mine hand,*
My waiting was but for a lot of the land,

* I Sam. xxviii. 21, Job xiii. 14.

Which his measure, who ruleth the battle array,
May mete for your best and your bravest to-day.

My kinsmen, my brothers, your phalanx is fair,
There's a shield, as I think, that should surely be there ;
Ye have darkened its disk, and its hour hath drawn near
To be reared as a trophy or borne as a bier.*

What said I ? Alas, though the foe in his flight,
Should quit me unspoiled on the field of the fight,
Ye would leave me to lie, with no hand to inurn,
For the dog to devour, or the stranger to spurn !

What matter ? Attendants my slumber shall grace,
With blood on the breast, and with fear on the face ;
And Sparta may own that the death hath atoned
For the crime of the cursed, whose life she disowned.

*[If his body were obtained by the enemy it would be reared as a trophy. If recovered by his friends, borne as a bier, unless, as he immediately called to mind, they should deny him funeral honors.]

By the banks of Eurotas her maidens shall meet,
And her mountains rejoice in the fall of your feet ;
And the cry of your conquest be lofty and loud,
O'er the lengthened array of the shield or the shroud.

And the fires of the grave shall empurple the air,
When they lick the white dust of the bones ye shall bear ;
The priest and the people, at altar and shrine,
Shall worship their manes, disdainful of mine.

Yet say that they fought for the hopes of their breast,
For the hearts that had loved them, the lips that had blessed ;
For the roofs that had covered, the country that claimed,
The sires that had named them, the sons they had named.

And say that I fought for the land of the free,
Though its bosom of blessing beat coldly for me ;
For the lips that had cursed me, the hearts that had scorned,
And the desolate hope of the death unadorned.

SALSETTE AND ELEPHANTA.

A PRIZE POEM.

“Religio . . . pedibus subjecta vicissim
Obteritur. Nos exæquat victoria cœlo.”

—LUCRETIVS.

'Tis eve—and o'er the face of parting day
Quick smiles of summer lightning flit and play ;
In pulses of broad light, less seen than felt,
They mix in heaven, and on the mountains melt ;
Their silent transport fills the exulting air—
'Tis eve, and where is evening half so fair ?
Oh ! deeply, softly sobs the Indian sea
O'er thy dark sands, majestic Dharavee,*
When, from each purple hill and polished lake,
The answering voices of the night awake
The fitful note of many a brilliant bird,—
The lizard's plunge, o'er distant waters heard,—

* The southern promontory of the island of Salsette.

The thrill of forest leaves—how soft, how swift
That floats and follows where the night-winds drift ;
Or, piercing through the calmness of the sky,
The jungle tiger's sharp and sudden cry.
Yet all is peace, for these weak voices tell
How deep the calm they break but not dispel.
The twilight heaven rolls on, like some deep stream
When breezes break not on its moving dream ;
Its trembling stars continual watches keep
And pause above Canarah's haunted steep ;*
Each in its path of first ascension hid
Behind the height of that pale pyramid,—
(The strength of nations hewed the basalt spire,†
And barbed its rocks like sacrificial fire.)
Know they the hour's approach, whose fateful flight
Was watched of yore from yonder cloudless height ?
Lone on its utmost peak, the Prophet Priest
Beheld the night unfolded from the East ;

* The central peak of Salsette.

† M. Anguétel du Perron, in his accounts of Canarah, says that its peak appears to have been hewn to a point by human art as an emblem of the solar ray.

In prescient awe perused its blazing scroll,
And read the records stretched from Pole to Pole ;
And though their eyes are dark, their lips are still,
Who watched and worshipped on Canarah's hill,
Wild superstition's visionary power
Still rules and fills the spirit of the hour :
The Indian maiden, through the scented grove,
Seeks the dim shore, and lights the lamp of love ;
The pious peasant, awe-struck and alone,
With radiant garland crowns the purple stone,*
And shrinks, returning through the star-lit glade,
When breezes stir the peepul's sacred shade ; †
For well his spirit knows the deep appeal
That love must mourn to miss, yet fear to feel ;
Low sounds, faint rays, upon the senses shed—
The voices of the lost, the dark eyes of the dead.

* "A stone painted with red, and placed at the foot of their favorite tree, is sufficient to call forth the devotion of the poor, who bring to it flowers and simple offerings."—J. S. BUCKINGHAM.

† The superstitious feeling of the Indian with respect to the peepul-tree is well known. Its shade is supposed to be loved and haunted by the dead.

How awful now, when night and silence brood
O'er Earth's repose and Ocean's solitude,
To trace the dim and devious paths that guide
Along Canarah's steep and craggy side,
Where, girt with gloom—inhabited by fear,—
The mountain homes of India's gods appear !
Range above range they rise, each hollow cave
Darkling as death, and voiceless as the grave ;
Save that the waving weeds in each recess
With rustling music mock its loneliness ;
And beasts of blood disturb, with stealthy tread,
The chambers of the breathless and the dead.
All else of life, of worship, past away,
The ghastly idols fall not, nor decay ;
Retain the lip of scorn, the rugged frown ;
And grasp the blunted sword and useless crown ;
Their altars desecrate, their names untold,
The hands that formed, the hearts that feared—how
cold !
Thou too—dark Isle ! whose shadow on the sea
Lies like the gloom that mocks our memory

When one bright instant of our former lot
Were grief, remembered, but were guilt, forgot.
Rock of the lonely crest ! how oft renewed
Have beamed the summers of thy solitude,
Since first the myriad steps that shook thy shore
Grew frail and few—then paused for evermore !
Answer—ye long-lulled echoes ! Where are they
Who clove your mountains with the shafts of day ;
Bade the swift life along their marble fly,
And struck their darkness into deity,
Nor claimed from thee—pale temple of the wave—
Record or rest, a glory or a grave ?
Now all are cold—the votary as his god,—
And by the shrine he feared, the courts he trod,
The livid snake extends his glancing trail,
And lifeless murmurs mingle on the gale.

Yet glorious still, though void, though desolate,
Proud Dharapori ! * gleams thy mountain gate,

* The Indian name for Elephanta.

What time, emergent from the eastern wave,
 The keen moon's crescent lights thy sacred cave ;
 And moving beams confuse, with shadowy change,
 Thy columns' massive might and endless range.
 Far, far beneath, where sable waters sleep,
 Those radiant pillars pierce the crystal deep,
 And mocking waves reflect, with quivering smile,
 Their long recession of refulgent aisle ;*
 As, where Atlantis hath her lonely home,
 Her grave of guilt, beneath the ocean's foam ;
 Above the lifeless hearth and guardless gate,
 The wildly-walking surges penetrate,
 And sapphire tints of phosphor lightning fall
 O'er the broad pillar, and the sculptured wall.—
 So, Dharapori ! through thy cold repose
 The flooding lustre of the moonlight flows ;
 New forms of fear,† by every touch displayed,
 Gleam, pale and passioned, through the dreadful shade,

* The interior of Elephanta is usually damp, and its floor covered with water two or three feet deep. By moonlight its shallowness would be unperceived.

† The sculptures of Elephanta have such "horrible and fearful formes that they make a man's hayre stande upright."—LINSCHOTEN.

In wreathed groups of dim, distorted life,
In ghastly calmness, or tremendous strife ;
While glaring eye and grasping hand attest
The mocked emotion of the marble breast.
Thus in the fevered dream of restless pain,
Incumbent horror broods upon the brain,
Through mists of blood colossal shapes arise,
Stretch their stiff limbs, and roll their rayless eyes.
Yet knew not here the chisel's touch to trace
The finer lineaments of form and face ;
No studious art of delicate design,
Conceived the shape, or lingered on the line.
The sculptor learned, on Indus' plains afar,
The various pomp of worship and of war ;
Impetuous ardor in his bosom woke,
And smote the animation from the rock.
In close battalions kingly forms advance,*
Wave the broad shield, and shake the soundless lance ;

* "Some of these figures have helmets of pyramidal form ; others wear crowns richly decorated with jewels ; others display large bushy ringlets of curled or flowing hair. In their hands they grasp sceptres and shields, the symbols of justice and the ensigns of religion, the wea-

With dreadful crests adorned, and orient gem,
Lightens the helm and gleams the diadem ;
Loose o'er their shoulders falls their flowing hair
With wanton wave, and mocks the unmoving air ;
Broad o'er their breasts extend the guardian zones
Broidered with flowers, and bright with mystic stones ;
Poised in ætherial march they seem to swim,
Majestic motion marked in every limb ;
In changeful guise they pass—a lordly train,
Mighty in passion, unsubdued in pain ;*
Revered as monarchs, or as gods adored,
Alternately they rear the sceptre and the sword.
Such were their forms and such their martial mien,
Who met by Indus' shores the Assyrian queen, †
When, with reverted force, the Indian dyed
His javelin in the pulses of her pride,

pons of war and the trophies of peace.”—MAURICE, *Antiq. of India*, vol. ii., p. 145.

* Many of them have countenances expressive of mental suffering.

† Semiramis. M. D'Ancarville supposes the cave to have been excavated by her army ; and insists on the similarity between the costume of the sculptured figures and that of her Indian adversaries.—See *D'Ancarville*, vol. i., p. 121.

And cast in death-heaps, by the purple flood,
Her strength of Babylonian multitude.

And mightier ones are there—apart—divine,
Presiding genii of the mountain shrine :
Behold, the giant group, the united three,
Faint symbol of an unknown Deity !
Here, frozen into everlasting trance,
Stern Siva's quivering lip and hooded glance ;
There, in eternal majesty serene,
Proud Brahma's painless brow and constant mien ;
There glows the light of Veeshnu's guardian smile,
But on the crags that shade yon inmost aisle
Shine not, ye stars ! Annihilation's lord *
There waves, with many an arm, the unsated sword.
Relentless holds the cup of mortal pain,
And shakes the spectral links that wreath his ghastly
chain.

Oh, could these lifeless lips be taught to tell
(Touched by Chaldean art, or Arab spell)

* Alluding to a sculpture representing the evil principle of India ;
he seems engaged in human sacrifice, and wears a necklace of skulls.

What votaries here have knelt, what victims died,
In pangs, their gladness, or in crimes, their pride,
How should we shun the awful solitude,
And deem the intruding footsteps dashed in blood !
How might the altar-hearths grow warm and red,
And the air shadowy with avenging dead !
Behold !—he stirs—that cold, colossal king !—
'Tis but the uncertain shade the moonbeams fling ;
Hark ! a stern voice awakes with sudden thrill !—
'Twas but the wandering wind's precarious will :
The distant echo dies, and all the cave is still.

Yet Fancy, floating on the uncertain light,
Fills with her crowded dreams the course of night ;
At her wild will æthereal forms appear,
And sounds, long silent, strike the startled ear :
Behold the dread Mithratic rite reclaim *
Its pride of ministers, its pomp of flame !

* Throughout the description of the rites of Mithra, I have followed Maurice, whose indefatigable research seems almost to have demonstrated the extreme antiquity, at least, of the Elephanta cavern, as well as its application to the worship of the solar orb, and of fire. For a detailed account of this worship, see MAURICE, *Indian Antiq.*, vol. ii., sec. 7.

Along the winding walls, in ordered row,
Flash myriad fires—the fretted columns glow ;
Beaming above the imitative sky
Extends the azure of its canopy,
Fairest where imaged star and airy sprite
Move in swift beauty and entrancing light ;
A golden sun reflected lustre flings,
And wandering Dewtahs* wave their crimson wings ;
Beneath, fed richly from the Arabian urn,
Undying lamps before the altar burn ;
And sleepless eyes the sacred sign behold,
The spiral orb of radiated gold ;
On this the crowds of deep voiced priests attend,
To this they loudly cry, they lowly bend ;
O'er their wan brows the keen emotions rise,
And pious phrenzy flashes from their eyes ;
Phrenzy in mercy sent, in torture tried,
Through paths of death their only guard and guide,

* Inferior spirits of various power and disposition, holding in the Hindoo mythology the place of angels. They appear in multitudes on the roof of the Elephanta cavern.

When, in dread answer to their youth's appeal,
Rose the red fire and waved the restless steel,*
And rushed the wintry billow's wildest wreck,—
Their God hath called them, and shall danger check ?
On—on—for ever on, though roused in wrath
Glare the grim lion on their lonely path ;
Though, starting from his coiled malignant rest,
The deadly dragon lift his crimson crest ;
Though corpse-like shadows round their footsteps flock,
And shafts of lightning cleave the incumbent rock ;
On, for behold, enduring honors wait
To grace their passage through the golden gate ; †
Glorious estate, and more than mortal power,
Succeed the dreadful expiating hour ;

* Alluding to the dreadful ceremonies of initiation which the priests of Mithra were compelled to undergo, and which seem to have had a close correspondence with the Eleusinian mysteries. See MAURICE, *Antiq. of India*, vol. v. p. 620.

† The sidereal metempsychosis was represented in the Mithratie rites by the ascent of a ladder, on which there were seven gates : the first of lead, representing Saturn ; the second of tin, Venus ; the third brass, Jupiter ; the fourth iron, Mercury ; the fifth mixed, Mars ; the sixth silver, the Moon ; the seventh of gold, the Sun.

Impurpled robes their weary limbs enfold
With stars enwoven, and stiff with heavenly gold ;
The mitra* veils their foreheads, rainbow-dyed,
The measured steps imperial sceptres guide ;
Glorious they move, and pour upon the air
The cloud of incense and the voice of prayer ;
While through the hollow vault, around them rise
Deep echoes from the couch of sacrifice,
In passionate gusts of sound,—now loud, now low,
With billowy pause, the mystic murmurs flow
Far dwindling on the breeze. Ere yet they die
Canarah hears, and all his peaks reply ;
His crested chasms the vocal winds explore,
Waste on the deep, and wander on the shore.
Above, the starry gloom is thrilled with fear,
The forests shake, the circling hamlets hear,
And wake to worship. Many an isle around,
Assembling votaries swell the sacred sound,

* The attire of Mithra's priests was splendid : the robes of purple, with the heavenly constellations embroidered on them in gold. They wore girdles representative of the zodiacal circle, and carried a golden sceptre in the form of a serpent. Ezekiel speaks of them as "exceeding in dyed attire upon their heads" (xxiii. 15).

And, troop by troop, along the woodland ways,
In equal measures pour responsive praise :
To Mithra first their kindling songs addressed,
Lull his long slumbers in the watery west ;
Next to the strength of each celestial sign
They raise the choral chaunt, the breathing line ;
Keen through the arch of heaven their hymns arise,
Auspicious splendors deck the answering skies.
The sacred cohorts, maddening as they sing,
Far through the air their flashing torches fling ;
From rock to rock the rushing glories leap,
Climb the wide hills, and clothe the central steep,
Till through the endless night a living line
Of lustre opens on the bounding brine ;
Ocean rejoices, and his isles prolong,
With answering zeal, those bursts of flame and song,
Till the strong vulture on Colombo's peak
Awakes with ruffled plume and startled shriek,
And the roused panther of Almorah's wood
Howls through his violated solitude.

'Tis past,—the mingled dream,—though slow and grey
On mead and mountain break the dawning day ;
Though stormy wreaths of lingering cloud oppress
Long time the winds that breathe—the rays that bless,—
They come, they come. Night's fitful visions fly
Like autumn leaves, and fade from fancy's eye ;
So shall the God of might and mercy dart
His day-beams through the caverns of the heart ;
Strike the weak idol from its ancient throne,
And vindicate the temple for His own.
Nor will He long delay. A purer light
Than Mithra cast, shall claim a holier rite ;
A mightier voice than Mithra's priests could pour
Resistless soon shall sound along the shore ;
Its strength of thunder vanquished fiends shall own,
And idols tremble through their limbs of stone.

Vain now the lofty light—the marble gleam—
Of the keen shaft that rose by Gunga's stream !
When round its base the hostile lightnings glowed,
And mortal insult mocked a god's abode,

What power, Destroyer,* seized with taming trance
Thy serpent sceptre, and thy withering glance ?
Low in the dust, its rocky sculptures rent,
Thine own memorial proves thee impotent.
Thy votaries mourn thy cold unheeding sleep,
Chide where they praised, and where they worshipped weep.

Yes—he shall fall, though once his throne was set
Where the high heaven and crested mountains met ;
Though distant shone with many an azure gem
The glacier glory of his diadem ;
Though sheets of sulphurous cloud and wreathed storm
Cast veil of terror round his shadowy form.
All, all are vain ! It comes, the hallowed day,
Whose dawn shall rend that robe of fear away ;

* Siva. This column was dedicated to him at Benares; and a tradition prevailed among his worshippers, that as soon as it should fall, one universal religion would extend over India, and Bramah be no more worshipped. It was lately thrown down in a quarrel between the Hindoos and Mussulmans. (See *Heber's Journal*.) Siva is spoken of in the following lines, as representative of Hindoo deities in general. His worship seems to have arisen in the fastnesses of the Himalayas, accompanied by all the gloomy features characteristic of the superstitions of hill countries.

Then shall the torturing spells that midnight knew
Far in the cloven dells of Mount Meru,
Then shall the moan of frenzied hymns, that sighed
Down the dark vale where Gunga's waters glide,
Then shall the idol chariot's thunder cease
Before the steps of them that publish peace.
Already are they heard,—how fair, how fleet,
Along the mountains flash their bounding feet !
Disease and death before their presence fly ;
Truth calls, and gladdened India hears the cry,
Deserts the darkened path her fathers trod,
And seeks redemption from the Incarnate God.

A SCYTHIAN BANQUET SONG.

[THE Scythians, according to Herodotus, made use of part of their enemies' bodies after death, for many domestic purposes ; particularly of the skull, which they scalped, wrapped in bull's hide, and filled up the cracks with gold ; and having gilded the hide and parts of the bone, used the vessel as a drinking-cup, wreathing it with flowers at feasts.]

I.

I THINK my soul was childish yet,

When first it knew my manhood's foe ;

But what I was, or where we met,

I know not—and I shall not know.

But I remember, now, the bed

On which I waked from such sick slumber

As after pangs of powerless dread,

Is left upon the limbs like lead,

Amidst a calm and quiet number

Of corpses, from whose cold decay

Mine infant fingers shrank away ;

My brain was wild, my limbs were weak,
And silence swallowed up my shriek—

Eleleu.

II.

Alas ! my kindred, dark and dead
Were those from whom I held aloof ;
I lay beneath the ruins red
Of what had been my childhood's roof ;
And those who quenched its wasted wood,
As morning broke on me, and mine,
Preserved a babe baptized in blood,
And human grief hath been its food,
And human life its wine.

What matter ?—Those who left me there
Well nerved mine infant limbs to bear
What, heaped upon my haughty head,
I might endure—but did not dread.

Eleleu.

III.

A stranger's hand, a stranger's love,
Saved my life and soothed my woe,

And taught my youth its strength to prove,
To wield the lance, and bend the bow.
I slew the wolf by Tyres' * shore,
I tracked the pard by chasm and cliff ;
Rich were the warrior spoils I wore ;
Ye know me well, though now no more
The lance obeys these fingers stiff ;
My hand was strong, my hope was high,
All for the glance of one dark eye :
The hand is weak, the heart is chill—
The glance that kindled, colder still.

Elelen.

IV.

By Tyres' bank, like Tyres' wave,
The hours of youth went softly by.
Alas ! their silence could not save
My being from an evil eye :
It watched me—little though I knew
The wrath around me rising slow,

* Tyres, a river of Scythia, now the Dneister.

Nor deemed my love like Upas dew,
A plague, that where it settled, slew.

My time approached ; I met my foe :
Down with a troop he came by night,*
We fought them by their lances' light.
On lifeless hearth, and guardless gate,
The dawn of day came desolate.

Eleleu.

V.

Away, away—a Persian's slave,

I saw my bird of beauty borne,
In wild despair, too weak to save,
Too maddening to mourn.

There dwells a sound within my brain

Of horses hoofs' beat swift and hollow,
Heard, when across the distant plain.
Elaira stretched her arms in vain,

To him whose limbs were faint to follow ;

* There were frequent incursions made by the Persians upon the Scythians before the grand invasion of Darius.

The spoiler knew not, when he fled,
The power impending o'er his head ;
The strength so few have tameless tried,
That love can give for grief to guide.

Eleleu.

VI.

I flung my bow behind my back,
And took a javelin in my hand,
And followed on the fiery track
Their rapine left upon the land.
The desert sun in silence set,
The desert darkness climbed the sky ;
I knew that one was waking yet,
Whose heart was wild, whose eye was wet,
For me and for my misery.
One who had left her glance of grief,
Of earthly guides my chosen and chief ;
Through thirst and fear, by wave and hill,
That dark eye watched and wooed me still.

Eleleu.

VII.

Weary and weak their traces lost,
I roved the brazen cities through ;
That Helle's undulating coast
Doth lift beside its billows blue.
Till in a palace-bordered street,
In the dusk starlight of the day,
A stalkless flower fell near my feet,
Withered and worn, yet passing sweet ;
Its root was left,—how far away ?
Its leaves were wet, though not with dew ;
The breast that kept, the hand that threw,
Were those of one who sickened more,
For the sweet breeze of Tyres' shore.
Eleleu.

VIII.

My tale is long. Though bolts of brass
Held not their captive's faint upbraiding,
They melt like wax, they bend like grass,
At sorrow's touch, when love is aiding ;

The night was dim, the stars were dead,
The drifting clouds were grey and wide ;
The captive joined me and we fled,
Quivering with joy, though cold with dread,
She shuddered at my side.
We passed the streets, we gained the gate,
Where round the wall its watchers wait ;
Our steps beneath were hushed and slow,
For the third time—I met my foe.
Eleleu.

IX.

Swift answering as his anger cried,
Came down the sworded sentinels ;
I dashed their closing spears aside ;
They thicken, as a torrent swells,
When tempests feed its mountain source,
O'er-matched, borne down, with javelins rent,
I backed them still with fainting force,
Till the life curdled in its course,
And left my madness innocent.

The echo of a maiden's shriek,
Mixed with my dreaming long and weak,
And when I woke the daybreak fell
Into a dark and silent cell.

Elelen.

X.

Know ye the price that must atone,
When power is mocked at by its slave ?
Know ye the kind of mercy shown,
When pride condemns, though love would save ?
A sullen splash was heard that night
To check the calm of Helle's flow ;
And there was much of love and light,
Quenched, where the foam-globes moved most white,
With none to save and few to know,
Me they led forth, at dawn of day,
To mock, to torture, and to slay ;
They found my courage calm and mild,
Until my foe came near and smiled.

Elelen.

XI.

He told me how the midnight chasm
Of ocean had been sweetly fed :
He paled—recoiling, for a spasm
Came o'er the limbs they dreamed were dead :
The earth grew hot—the sky grew black—
The twisted cords gave way like tow ;
I felt the branding fetters crack,
And saw the torturers starting back,
And more I do not know,
Until my stretched limbs dashed their way
Through the cold sea's resulting spray,
And left me where its surges bore
Their voices to a lifeless shore.

Elelen.

XII.

Mine aged eyes are dim and dry ;
They have not much to see or mourn,
Save when in sleep, pale thoughts pass by—
My heart is with their footsteps worn

Thy soul on earth supremely smiled,
In beauty bright, in mercy mild,
It looked to love, it breathed to bless—
It died, and left me—merciless.

Eleleu.

XIV.

And men shrink from me, with no sense
That the fierce heart they fear and fly,
Is one, whose only evidence
Of beating is in agony.
They know, with me, to match or melt,
The sword or prayer alike are vain ;
The spirit's presence, half unfelt,
Hath left,—slow withering where it dwelt,
One precedence of pain.
All that my victims feel or fear
Is well avenged by something here ;
And every curse they breathe on me
Joins in the deep voice of the sea.

Eleleu.

XV.

It rolls—it coils—it foams—it flashes,
Pale and putrid—ghastly green ;
Lit with light of dead men's ashes
Flickering through the black weed's screen.
Oh ! there along the breathless land,
Elaira keeps the couch allotted ;
The waters wave her weary hand,
And toss pale shells and ropy sand
About her dark hair, clasped and clotted.
The purple isles are bright above
The frail and moon-blanced bones of love ;
Their citron breeze is full of bliss,
Her lips are cool without its kiss.
Elelen.

XVI.

My thoughts are wandering and weak ;
Forgive an old man's dotard dreaming ;
I know not sometimes when I speak
Such visions as have quiet seeming.

I told you how my madness bore
My limbs from torture. When I woke,
I do remember something more
Of wandering on the wet sea-shore,
By waving weed and withered rock,
Calling Elaira, till the name
Crossed o'er the waters as they came—
Mildly—to hallow and to bless
Even what had made it meaningless—
Eleleu.

XVII.

The waves in answering murmurs mixed,
Tossed a frail fetter on the sand ;
Too well I knew whose fingers fixed,
Whose arm had lost the golden band ;
For such it was, as still confines
Faint Beauty's arm who will not listen,
The words of love that mockery twines
To soothe the soul that pants and pines
Within its rose-encumbered prison.

The waters freed her ; she who wore
Fetter or armlet needs no more ;
Could the waves tell, who saw me lift,
For whom I kept, their glittering gift,
Elelen.

XVIII.

Slow drifts the hour when Patience waits
Revenge's answering orison ;
But—one by one the darkening Fates
Will draw the balanced axle on,
Till torture pays the price of pride,
And watches wave with sullen shine,
The sword of sorrow justified.
The long years kept their quiet glide,
His hour was past : they brought me mine.
When steed to steed, and rank to rank,
With matched numbers fierce and frank,
(The war-wolves waiting near to see
Our battle bright) my Foe met Me.
Ha—Hurra !

XIX.

As the tiger tears through the jungle reeds,
As the west wind breaks through the sharp corn ears,
As the quick death follows where the lightning leads,
Did my dark horse bear through the bended spears ;
And the blood came up to my brain like a mist,
With a dark delight and a fiery feel ;
For the black darts hailed, and the javelins hissed,
To the corpses clasped in their tortured twist,
From mine arms like rain from the red-hot steel.
Well went the wild horses—well rode their lords—
Wide waved the sea of their circling swords;
But down went the wild steeds—down went the sea—
Down went the dark banners—down went He.
Ha—Hurra !

XX.

For, forward fixed, my frenzy rushed,
To one pale plume of fitful wave ;
With failing strength, o'er corpses crushed,
My horse obeyed the spurs I gave.

Slow rolled the tide of battle by,

And left me on the field alone

Save that a goodly company

Lay gazing on the bright blue sky,

All as stiff as stone.

And the howling wolves came, merry and thick,

The flesh to tear and the bones to pick.

I left his carcass, a headless prize,

To these priests of mine anger's sacrifice.

Ha—Hurra!

XXI.

Hungry they came, though at first they fled

From the grizzly look of a stranger guest—

From a horse with its hoof on a dead man's head,

And a soldier who leaned on a lance in his breast.

The night wind's voice was hoarse and deep,

But there were thoughts within me rougher,

When my foiled passion could not keep

His eyes from settling into sleep

That could not see, nor suffer.

He knew his spirit was delivered
By the last nerve my sword had severed,
And lay—his death pang scarcely done,
Stretched at my mercy—asking none.

Elelen.

XXII.

His lips were pale. They once had worn
A fiercer paleness. For awhile
Their gashes kept the curl of scorn,
But now—they always smile.
A life like that of smouldering ashes,
Had kept his shadowy eyeballs burning.
Full through the neck my sabre crashes—
The black blood burst beneath their lashes
In the strained sickness of their turning.
By my bridle-rein did I hang the head,
And I spurred my horse through the quick and dead,
Till his hoofs and his hair dropped thick and fresh,
From the black morass of gore and flesh.

Ha—Hurra !

XXIII.

My foe had left me little gold
To mock the stolen food of the grave,
Except one circlet : I have told ,
The arm that lost, the surge that gave,
Flexile it was, of fairest twist :
Pressing its sunlike, woven line,
A careless counter had not missed
One pulse along a maiden's wrist,
So softly did the clasp confine.
This—molten till it flowed as free
As daybreak on the Egean sea,
He who once clasped—for Love to sever
And death to lose, received—for ever.

XXIV.

I poured it round the wrinkled brow,
Till hissed its cold, corrupted skin ;
Through sinuous nerves the fiery flow
Sucked and seared the brain within.

The brittle bones were well annealed,

A bull's hide bound the goblet grim,

Which backwards bended, and revealed

The dark eye sealed, the set lips peeled :

Look here ! how I have pardoned him.

They call it glorious to forgive ;

'Tis dangerous, among those that live,

But the dead are daggerless and mild,

And my foe smiles on me—like a child.

XXV.

Fill me the wine ! for daylight fades,

The evening mists fall cold and blue ;

My soul is crossed with lonelier shades,

My brow is damp with darker dew ;

The earth hath nothing but its bed

Left more for me to seek, or shun ;

My rage is passed—my vengeance fed—

The grass is wet with what I've shed,

The air is dark with what I've done ;

And the gray mound, that I have built
Of intermingled grief and guilt,
Sits on my breast with sterner seat
Than my old heart can bear, and beat.

Eleleu.

XXVI.

Fill wine ! These fleshless jaws are dry,
And gurgle with the crimson breath ;
Fill me the wine ! for such as I
Are meet, methinks, to drink with death.
Give me the roses ! They shall weave
One crown for me, and one for him,
Fresher than his compeers receive,
Who slumber where the white worms leave
Their tracks of slime on cheek and limb.
Kiss me, mine enemy ! Lo ! how it slips,
The rich red wine through his skeleton lips ;
His eye-holes glitter, his loose teeth shake,
But their words are all drowsy and will not wake.

XXVII.

That lifeless gaze is fixed on me ;

Those lips would would hail a bounden brother ;

We sit in love, and smile to see

The things that we have made each other.

The wreaking of our wrath has reft

Our souls of all that loved or lightened :

He knows the heart his hand has left,

He sees its calm and closeless cleft,

And *I*—the bones my vengeance whitened.

Kiss me, mine enemy ! Fill thee with wine !

Be the flush of thy revelling mingled with mine ;

Since the hate and the horror we drew with our breath

Are lost in forgiveness, and darkened in death.

THE SCYTHIAN GUEST.

WHEN the master of a Scythian family died he was placed in his state chariot, and carried to visit every one of his blood relations. Each of them gave him and his attendants a splendid feast at which the dead man sat at the head of the table, and a piece of everything was put on his plate. In the morning he continued his circuit. This round of visits generally occupied nearly forty days, and he was never buried till the whole number had elapsed. I have taken him at about six days old when a little phosphoric light might play about his skin in the dark, and yet the corruption would not, in a cool country, have made anything shapeless or decidedly unpleasant.—See *Herodotus, Melpomene*, 73.

I.

THE feast is full, the guests are gay,
Though at his lance-illumined door
Still must the anxious master stay,
For, by the echoing river shore,
He hears the hot and hurrying beat
Of harnessed horse's flying feet,
And waits to watch and yearns to greet
The coming of the brave.

Behold—like showers of silver sleet,

His lines of lances wind and wave :

He comes as he was wont to ride

By Hypanis' war troubled tide,

When, like the west wind's sternest stoop,

Was the strength of his tempestuous troop,

And when their dark steed's shadows swift

Had crossed the current's foamless drift,

The light of the river grew dazzled and dim,

With the flash of the hair and the flight of the limb.

II.

He comes—urged on by shout and lash,

His favorite courser flies ;

There's frenzy in its drooping dash,

And sorrow in its eyes.

Close on its hoofs the chariots crash,

Their shook reins ring—their axles flash—

The charioteers are wild and rash ;

Panting and cloven the swift air feels

The red breath of the whirling wheels,

Hissing with heat, and drunk with speed
Of wild delight, that seems to feed
Upon the fire of its own flying ;
Yet he for whom they race is lying
Motionless in his chariot, and still
Like one of weak desire or fettered will,
Is it the sun-lulled sleep of weariness
That weighs upon him ? Lo ! there is no stress
Of slumber on his eyelids—some slow trance,
Seems dwelling on the darkness of his glance ;
Its depth is quiet, and its keenness cold
As an eagle's quenched with lightning, the close fold
Of his strong arms is listless, like the twine
Of withered weeds along the waving line
Of flowing streams ; and o'er his face a strange
Deep shadow is cast, which doth not move nor change.

III.

At the known gate the coursers check,
With panting breast and lowly neck ;

From kingly group, from menial crowd,
The cry of welcome rings aloud :
It was not wont to be so weak,—
Half a shout and half a shriek,
Mixed with the low yet penetrating quiver
Of constrained voices, such as creep
Into cold words, when, dim and deep,
Beneath the wild heart's death-like shiver
Mocks at the message that the lips deliver.

IV.

Doth he not hear ? Will he not wake ?
That shout of welcome did not break,
Even for an instant on the trace
Of the dark shadow o'er his face.
Behold, his slaves in silence lift
That frame so strong, those limbs so swift,
Like a sick child's ; though half erect
He rose when first his chariot checked,
He fell—as leaves fall on the spot
Where summer sun shall waken not

The mingling of their veined sensation,
With the black earth's wormy desolation.
With stealthy tread, like those that dread
To break the peace of sorrow's slumber,

They move, whose martial force he led,
Whose arms his passive limbs encumber :

Through passage and port, through corridor and court,
They hold their dark, slow-trodden track ;

Beneath that crouching figure's scowl
The household dogs hang wildly back,

With wrinkled lip and hollow howl ;
And on the mien of those they meet,

Their presence passes like the shadow
Of the gray storm-cloud's swirling sheet,

Along some soft sun-lighted meadow ;
For those who smiled before they met,

Have turned away to smile no more ;
Even as they pass, their lips forget

The words they wove—the hues they wore ;
Even as they look, the eyes grow wet
That glanced most bright before !

V.

The feast is ranged, the guests are met ;

High on the central throne,

That dark and voiceless Lord is set,

And left alone ;

And the revel is loud among the crowd,

As the laugh on surges free,

Of their merry and multitudinous lips,

When the fiery foamlight skims and skips,

Along the sounding sea.

The wine is red and wildly shed,

The wreathed jest is gaily sped.

And the rush of their merriment rises aloof

Into the shade of the ringing roof ;

And yet their cheeks look faint and dead,

And their lips look pale and dry ;

In every heart there dwells a dread,

And a trouble in every eye.

VI.

For sternly charmed, or strangely chill,

That lonely Lord sits stiff and still,

Far in the chamber gathered back
Where the lamps are few, and the shadows black ;
So that the strained eye scarce can guess
At the fearful form of his quietness,
And shrinks from what it cannot trace,
Yet feels, is worse than even the error
That veils, within that ghastly space,
The shrouded form and shadowed face
Of indistinct, unmoving terror.
And the life and light of the atmosphere
Are choked with mingled mist and fear,
Something half substance and half thought,—
A feeling, visibly inwrought
Into the texture of the air ;
And though the fanned lamps flash and flare
Among the other guests—by Him,
They have grown narrow, and blue and dim,
And steady in their fire, as if
Some frigid horror made them stiff.
Nor eye hath marked, nor ear hath heard
That form, if once it breathed or stirred ;

Though the dark revel's forced fits
Penetrate where it sleeps and sits ;
But this, their fevered glances mark
Ever, for ever, calm and dark ;
With lifeless hue, and changeless trace,
That shadow dwells upon his face.

VII.

It is not pain, nor passion, but a deep
Incorporated darkness, like the sleep
Of the lead-coloured anger of the ocean,
When the heaven is fed with death, and its gray motion
Over the waves, invisible—it seems
Entangled with the flesh, till the faint gleams
Of natural flush have withered like the light
Of the keen morning, quenched with the close flight
Of thunder ; and beneath that deadly veil,
The coldness of the under-skin is pale
And ghastly, and transparent as beneath
Some midnight vapour's intertwined wreath
Glares the green moonlight : and a veined fire
Seems throbbing through it, like a dim desire

Felt through inanimation, of charmed life
Struggling with strong sick pants of beaming strife,
That wither and yet warm not :—through its veins,
The quenched blood beats not, burns not, but dark
 stains

Of congealed blackness, on the cheek and brow,
Lie indistinct amidst their frightful shade ;
The breathless lips, like two thin flakes of snow,
Gleam with wan lines, by some past agony made
To set into the semblance of a smile,
Such as strong-hearted men wear wildly, while
Their souls are twined with torture ; calm and fixed,
And yet distorted, as it could not be,
Had not the chill with which it froze been mixed

With twitching cords of some strong agony.
And the white teeth gleam through the ghastly chasm
Of that strange smile ; close clenched, as the last spasm
Of the wrung nerves has knit them ; could they move,
They would gnash themselves to pieces ; from above
The veiling shadow of the forehead falls,
Yet with an under-glare the fixed balls

Of the dark eyes gleam steadily, though not
With any inward light, or under-thought,
But casting back from their forgetful trance,
To each who looks, the flash of his own glance ;
So that each feels, of all assembled there,
Fixed on himself, that strange and meaning glare
Of eyes most motionless ; the long dark hair
Hangs tangled o'er the faded feature's gloom,
Like withered weeds above a mouldering tomb,
Matted in black decay ; the cold night air
Hath stirred them once or twice, even as despair
Plays with the heart's worn chords, that last retain
Their sense of sorrow, and their pulse of pain.

VIII.

Yet strike, oh ! strike the chorded shell,
And let the notes be low and skilled ;
Perchance the words he loved so well
May thrill as once they thrilled.
That deadened ear may still be true
To the soft voice that once it knew ;

And the throbs that beat below the heart,

And the joys that burn above,

Shall bid the light of laughter dart

Along the lips of love.

Alas! those tones are all untold

On ear and heart so closed and cold ;

The slumber shall be sound,—the night,—how long !

That will not own the power of smile or song ;

Those lips of love may burn, his eyes are dim ;

That voice of joy may wake, but not for him.

IX.

The rushing wine, the rose's flush,

Have crowned the goblet's glancing brim ;

But who shall eall the blossom's blush,

Or bid the goblet flow for him ?

For how shall thirst or hunger's heat

Attend the sunless track,

Towards the cool and calm retreat,

From which his courser's flashing feet

Can never bear him back ?

There, by the cold corpse-guarded hill,
The shadows fall both broad and still ;
There shall they fall at night,—at noon,
Nor own the day star's warning,
Grey shades, that move not with the moon,
And perish not with morning.

X.

Farewell, farewell, thou presence pale !
The bed is stretched where thou shouldst be ;
The dawn may lift its crimson veil,
It doth not breathe, nor burn for thee.
The mien of might, the glance of light,
That checked or cheered the war's career,
Are dreadless in the fiery fight,
Are dreadful only here.
Exulting hatred, red and rife,
May smile to mark thine altered brow ;
There are but those who loved in life,
Who fear thee, now.

Farewell, farewell, thou Presence pale !

The couch is near where thou shouldst be ;
Thy troops of Death have donned their mail,
And wait and watch for thee.

THE BROKEN CHAIN.

PART FIRST.

I.

It is most sad to see—to know
This world so full of war and woe,
E'er since our parents failing duty.
Bequeathed the curse to all below,
And left the burning breach of beauty.
Where the flower hath fairest hue,
Where the breeze hath balmiest breath,
Where the dawn hath softest dew,
Where the heaven hath deepest blue,
There is death.
Where the gentle streams of thinking,
Through our hearts that flow so free,
Have the deepest, softest sinking
And the fullest melody;
Where the crown of hope is nearest.
Where the voice of joy is clearest.

Where the heart of youth is lightest,
Where the light of love is brightest,
There is death.

II.

It is the hour when day's delight
Fadeth in the dewy sorrow
Of the star inwoven night ;
And the red lips of the west
Are in smiles of lightning drest,
Speaking of a lovely morrow :
But there's an eye in which, from far,
The chill beams of the evening star
Do softly move, and mildly quiver ;
Which, ere the purple mountains meet
The light of morning's misty feet,
Will be dark—and dark for ever.

III.

It was within a convent old,
Through her lips the low breath sighing,

Which the quick pains did unfold
With a paleness calm, but cold,
Lay a lovely lady dying.
As meteors from the sunless north
Through long low clouds illumine the air,
So brightly shone her features forth
Amidst her darkly tangled hair ;
And, like a spirit, still and slow,
A light beneath that raven veil
Moved,—where the blood forgot to glow,
As moonbeams shine on midnight snow,
So dim,—so sad,—so pale.
And, ever as the death came nearer,
That melancholy light waxed clearer :
It rose, it shone, it never dwindled,
As if in death it could not die ;
The air was filled with it, and kindled
As souls are by sweet agony.
Where once the life was rich and red,
The burning lip was dull and dead,
As crimson cloud-streaks melt away,
Before a ghastly darkened day.

Faint and low the pulses faded,
One by one, from brow and limb ;
There she lay—her dark eyes shaded
By her fingers dim ;
And through their paly brightness burning
With a wild inconstant motion,
As reflected stars of morning
Through the crystal foam of ocean.
There she lay—like something holy,
Moveless—voiceless, breathing slowly,
Passing, withering, fainting, failing,
Lulled and lost and unbewailing.

IV.

The abbess knelt beside, to bless
Her parting hour with tenderness,
And watched the light of life depart,
With tearful eye and weary heart ;
And, ever and anon, would dip
Her fingers in the hallowed water,
And lay it on her parching lip,
Or cross her death damped brow ;

And softly whisper,—Peace,—my daughter,
For thou shalt slumber softly now.
And upward held, with pointing finger,
The cross before her darkening eye ;
Its glance was changing, nor did linger
Upon the ebon and ivory ;
Her lips moved feebly, and the air
Between them whispered—not with prayer !
Oh ! who shall know what wild and deep
Imaginations rouse from sleep,
Within that heart, whose quick decay
So soon shall sweep them all away.
Oh ! who shall know what things they be
That tongue would tell—that glance doth see ;
Which rouse the voice, the vision fill,
Ere eye be dark, and tongue be still.

V.

It is most fearful when the light
Of thoughts, all beautiful and bright,

That through the heart's illumination
Darts burning beams and fiery flashes,
Fades into weak wan animation,
And darkens into dust and ashes ;
And hopes, that to the heart have been
As to the forest is its green,
(Or as the gentle passing by
Of its spirits' azure wings
Is to the broad, wind-wearied sky) ;
Do pale themselves like fainting things,
And wither, one by one, away,
Leaving a ghastly silence where
Their voice was wont to move and play
Amidst the fibres of our feeling,
Like the low and unseen stealing,
Of the soft and sultry air ;
That, with its fingers weak unweaves
The dark and intertangled hair,
Of many moving forest leaves ;
And, though their life be lost do float,
Around us still, yet far remote,

And come at the same call arranged,
By the same thoughts, but oh, how changed !
Alas ! dead hopes are fearful things,

To dwell around us, for their eyes
Pierce through our souls like adder stings ;

Vampyre-like their troops arise,
Each in his own death entranced,
Frozen and corpse-countenanced ;
Filling memory's maddened eye
With a shadowed mockery.

And a wan and fevered vision,
Of her loved and lost Elysian ;
Until we hail, and love, and bless
The last strange joy, where joy hath fled,
The last one hope, where hope is dead,

The finger of forgetfulness ;
Which, dark as night, and dull as lead,
Comes across the spirit passing,

Like a coldness through night air,
With its withering wings effacing
Thoughts that lived or lingered there ;

Light, and life, and joy, and pain,
Till the frozen heart rejoices,
As the echoes of lost voices

Die and do not rise again ;
And shadowy memories wake no more
Along the hearts' deserted shore ;
But fall and faint away and sicken,
Like a nation fever-stricken,
And see not from the bosom reft
The desolation they have left.

VI.

Yet, though that trance be still and deep,
It will be broken ere its sleep
Be dark and unawaked—forever ;
And from the soul quick thoughts will leap
Forth like a sad, sweet-singing river,
Whose gentle waves flow softly o'er
That broken heart,—that desert shore ;
The lamp of life leaps up before

Its light be lost to live no more ;
Ere yet its shell of clay be shattered,
And all the beams at once could pour,
In dust of death be darkly scattered.

VII.

Alas ! the stander-by might tell
That lady's racking thoughts too well ;
The work within he might desery
By trembling brow, and troubled eye,
That as the lightning fiery, fierce,
Strikes chasms along the keen ice plain ;
The barbed and burning memories pierce
Her dark and dying brain.
And many mingled visions swim
Within the convent chamber dim ;
The sad twilight whose lingering lines
Fall faintly through the forest pines,
And with their dusky radiancee lume
That lowly bed and lonely room,
Are filled, before her earnest gaze,
With dazzling dreams of by-gone days.

They come, they come, a countless host,
Forms long unseen, and looks long lost,
And voices loved,—not well forgot,
Awake and seem, with accents dim,
Along the convent air to float ;
That innocent air that knoweth not,
A sound except the vesper hymn.

VIII.

'Tis past, that rush of hurried thought,
The light within her deep dark eye
Was quenched by a wan tear mistily,
Which trembled though it lightened not,
As the cold peace, which all may share,
Soothed the last sorrow life could bear.
What grief was that, the broken heart
Loved to the last, and would not part ?
What grief was that, whose calmness cold
By death alone could be consoled ?
As the soft hand of coming rest
Bowed her fair head upon her breast,

As the last pulse decayed, to keep
Her heart from heaving in its sleep,
The silence of her voice was broken,
As by a gasp of mental pain ;
“ May the faith thou hast forgotten
Bind thee with its broken chain.”
The Abbess raised her, but in vain ;
For, as the last faint word was spoken,
The silver cord was burst in twain,
The golden bowl was broken.

PART SECOND.

I.

The bell from Saint Cecilia's shrine
Had tolled the evening hour of prayer ;
With tremulation, far and fine,
It waked the purple air :
The peasant heard its distant beat,
And crossed his brow with reverence meet :
The maiden heard it sinking sweet

Within her jasmine bower,
And treading down, with silver feet,
Each pale and passioned flower :
The weary pilgrim, lowly lying
By Saint Cecilia's fountain grey,
Smiled to hear that curfew dying
Down the darkening day :
And where the white waves move and glisten
Along the river's reedy shore,
The lonely boatman stood to listen,
Leaning on his lazy oar.

II.

On Saint Cecilia's vocal spire
The sun had cast his latest fire,
And flecked the west with many a fold
Of purple clouds o'er bars of gold.
That vocal spire is all alone,
Albeit its many winding tone
Floats waste away—oh ! far away,
Where bowers are bright and fields are gay ;

That vocal spire is all alone,
Amidst a secret wilderness,
With deep free forest overgrown ;
And purple mountains, which the kiss
Of pale-lipped clouds doth fill with love
Of the bright heaven that burns above,
The woods around are wild and wide,
And interwove with breezy motion ;
Their bend before the tempest tide
Is like the surge of shoreless ocean ;
Their summer voice is like the tread
Of trooping steeds to battle bred ;
Their autumn voice is like the cry
Of a nation clothed with misery ;
And the stillness of the winter's wood
Is as the hush of a multitude.

III.

The banks beneath are flecked with light,
All through the clear and crystal night,
For as the blue heaven, rolling on,
Doth lift the stars up one by one ;

Each, like a bright eye through its gates
Of silken lashes dark and long,
With lustre fills, and penetrates
Those branches close and strong ;
And nets of tangled radiance weaves
Between the many twinkling leaves,
And through each small and verdant chasm
Lets fall a flake of fire,
Till every leaf, with voiceful spasm,
Wakes like a golden lyre.
Swift, though still, the fiery thrill
Creeps along from spray to spray,
Light and music, mingled, fill
Every pulse of passioned breath ;
Which, o'er the incense—sickened death
Of the faint flowers, that live by day,
Floats like a soul above the clay,
Whose beauty hath not passed away.

IV.

Hark ! hark ! along the twisted roof
Of bough and leafage, tempest-proof,

There whispers, hushed and hollow,
The beating of a horse's hoof,
Which low, faint echoes follow,
Down the deeply-swarded floor
Of a forest aisle, the muffled tread,
Hissing where the leaves are dead,
Increases more and more ;
And lo ! between the leaves and light,
Up the avenue's narrow span,
There moves a blackness, shaped like
The shadow of a man.
Nearer now, where through the maze
Cleave close the horizontal rays :
It moves—a solitary knight,
Borne with undulation light
As is the windless walk of ocean,
On a black steed's Arabian grace,
Mighty of mien, and proud of pace,
But modulate of motion.
O'er breast and limb, from head to heel,
Fall flexile folds of sable steel ;

Little the lightning of war could avail,
If it glanced on the strength of the folded mail.
The beaver bars his vizard mask,
By outward bearings unrevealed :
He bears no crest upon his casque,
No symbol on his shield.
Slowly and with slackened rein,
Either in sorrow, or in pain,
Through the forest he paces on,
As our life does in a desolate dream,
When the heart and the limbs are as heavy as stone,
And the remembered tone and moony gleam
Of hushed voices and dead eyes
Draw us on the dim path of shadowy destinies.

v.

The vesper chime hath ceased to beat,
And the hill echoes to repeat
The trembling of the argent bell.
What second sounding—dead and deep,
And cold of cadence, stirs the sleep
Of twilight with its sullen swell ?

The knight drew bridle, as he heard
Its voice creep through his beaver barred,
Just where a cross of marble stood,
Grey in the shadow of the wood.
Whose youngest coppice, twined and torn,
Concealed its access worship-worn :
It might be chance—it might be art,
Or opportune, or unconfessed,
But from this cross there did depart
A pathway to the west ;
By which a narrow glance was given,
To the high hills and highest heaven,
To the blue river's bended line,
And Saint Cecilia's lonely shrine.

VI.

Blue, and baseless, and beautiful
Did the boundless mountains bear
Their folded shadows into the golden air.
The comfortlessness of their chasms was full
Of orient cloud and undulating mist,
Which, where their silver cataracts hissed,

Quivered with panting colour. Far above
A lightning pulse of soundless fire did move
In the blue heaven itself, and, snake-like slid
Round peak and precipice, and pyramid ;
White lines of light along their crags alit,
And the cold lips of their chasms were wreathed
with it,

Until they smiled with passionate fire ; the sky
Hung over them with answering ecstasy ;
Through its pale veins of cloud, like blushing blood,
From south to north the swift pulsation glowed
With infinite emotion ; but it ceased

In the far chambers of the dewy west.
There the weak day stood withering, like a spirit
Which, in its dim departure, turns to bless
Their sorrow whom it leaveth, to inherit
Their lonely lot of night and nothingness.

Keen in its edge, against the farthest light,
The cold calm earth its black horizon lifted,
Though a faint vapour, which the winds had sifted
Like thin sea-sand, in undulations white

And multitudinous, veiled the lower stars.

And over this there hung successive bars

Of crimson mist, which had no visible ending

But in the eastern gloom ; voiceless and still,

Illimitable in their arched extending,

They kept their dwelling place in heaven ; the chill

Of the passing night-wind stirred them not ; the ascending

Of the keen summer moon was marked by them

Into successive steps ; the plenitude

Of pensive light was kindled and subdued

Alternate, as her crescent keel did stem

Those waves of currentless cloud, the diadem

Of her companion planet near her, shed

Keen quenchless splendor down the drowsy air ;

Glowed as she glowed, and followed where she led,

High up the hill of the night heaven, where

Thin threads of darkness, braided like black hair,

Where in long trembling tresses interwoven,

The soft blue eyes of the superior deep

Looked through them, with the glance of those who
cannot weep

For sorrow. Here and there the veil was cloven,

By crossing of faint winds, whose wings did keep
Such cadence as the breath of dreamless sleep
Among the stars, and soothed with strange delight
The vain vacuity of the Infinite.

VII.

Stiff as stone, and still as death,
 Stood the knight like one amazed,
And dropped his rein, and held his breath,
 So anxiously he gazed.
Oh ! well might such a scene and sun
 Surprise the sudden sight,
And yet his mien was more of one
 In dread than in delight.
His glance was not on heaven or hill,
 On cloud or lightning, swift or still,
 azure earth or orient air ;
But long his fixèd look did lie
On one bright line of western sky,—
 What saw he there ?

VIII.

On the brow of a lordly line

Of chasm-divided crag, there stood

The walls of Saint Cecilia's shrine.

Above the undulating wood

Broad basalt bulwarks, stern and stiff,

Ribbed, like black bones, the grisly cliff.

On the torn summit stretched away

The convent walls, tall, old, and grey ;

So strong their ancient size did seem,

So stern their mountain seat,

Well might the passing pilgrim deem

Such desperate dwelling place more meet

For soldier true, or baron bold,

For army's guard or bandit's hold,

Than for the rest, deep, calm, and cold,

Of those whose tale of troublous life is told.

IX.

The topmost tower rose, narrow and tall,

O'er the broad mass of crag and wall;

Against the streak of western light

It raised its solitary height.

Just above, nor far aloof,

From the cross upon its roof,

Sat a silver star.

The low clouds drifting fast and far,

Gave, by their own mocking loss,

Motion to the star and cross.

Even the black tower was stirred below

To join the dim, mysterious march,

The march so strangely slow.

Near its top an opening arch

Let through a passage of pale sky

Enclosed with stern captivity;

And in its hollow height there hung,

From a black-bar, a brazen bell :

Its hugeness was traced clear and well

The slanting rays among.

Ever and anon it swung

Halfway round its whirling wheel ;

Back again, with rocking reel,

Lazily its length was flung,
Till brazen lip and beating tongue.
Met once, with unrepeated peal,
Then paused ;—until the winds could feel
 The weight of the wide sound that clung
To their inmost spirit, like the appeal
 Of startling memories, strangely strung,
That point to pain, and yet conceal.
 Again with single sway it rung,
And the black tower beneath could feel
The undulating tremor steal
• Through its old stones, with long shiver,
The wild woods felt it creep and quiver
Through their thick leaves and hushed air,
As fear creeps through a murderer's hair.
And the gray reeds beside the river,
In the moonlight meek and mild,
Moved like spears when war is wild.

X.

And still the knight like statue stood,
In the arched opening of the wood.

Slowly still the brazen bell
Marked its modulated knell;
Heavily, heavily, one by one,
The dull strokes gave their thunder tone.
So long the pause between was led,
Ere one rose the last was dead—
Dead and lost by hollow and hill.
Again, again, it gathered still;
Ye who hear, peasant or peer,
By all you hope and all you fear,
Lowly now be heart and knee,
Meekly be your orison said
For the body in its agony,
And the spirit in its dread.

XI.

Reverent as a cowlèd monk
The knight before the cross had sunk;
Just as he bowed his helmless head,
Twice the bell struck faint and dead,
And ceased. Hill, valley, and winding shore
The rising roll received no more.

His lips were weak, his words were low,
A paleness came across his brow ;
He started to his feet, in fear
Of something that he seemed to hear.
Was it the west wind that did feign
Articulation strange and vain ?
Vainly with thine ear thou warrest :
Lo ! it comes, it comes again !
Through the dimly woven forest
Comes the cry of one in pain—
“ May the faith thou hast forgotten
Bind thee with its broken chain.”

PART THIRD.

I.

On grey Amboise's rocks and keep
The early shades of evening sleep,
And veils of mist, white-folded, fall
Round his long range of iron wall ;
O'er the last line of withering light
The quick bats cut with angled flight,

And the low breathing fawns that rest
The twilight forest through,
Each on his starry flank and stainless breast
Can feel the coolness of the dew
Soothing his sleep with heavenly weight :
Who are these who tread so late
Beyond Amboise's castle gate,
And seek the garden shade ?
The flowers are closed, the paths are dark,
Their marble guards look stern and stark,
The birds are still, the leaves are stayed,
On windless bough, and sunless glade.
Ah ! who are these that walk so late,
Beyond Amboise's castle gate ?

II.

Steep down the river's margin sink
The gardens of Amboise,
And all their inmost thickets drink
The wide, low water-voice.
By many a bank whose blossoms shrink

Amidst sweet herbage young and cold,
Through many an arch and avenue,
That noontide roofs with checkered blue,
And paves with fluctuating gold,
Pierced by a thousand paths that guide
Grey echo-haunted rocks beside,
And into caves of cool recess,
Which ever-falling fountains dress
With emerald veils, dashed deep in dew,
And through dim thickets that subdue
The crimson light of flowers afar,
As sweet rain doth the sunset, decked
Themselves with many a living star,
Which music-winged bees detect
By the white rays and ceaseless odor shed
Over the scattered leaves that every day lays dead.

III.

But who are these that pass so late
Beneath Amboise's echoing gate,

And seek the sweet path, poplar-shaded,
By breeze and moonbeam uninvaded ?
They are two forms, that move like one,
Each to the music of the other's lips,
The cold night thrilling with the tone
Of their low words—the grey eclipse,
Cast from the tangled boughs above.
Their dark eyes penetrate with love ;
Two forms, one crested, calm, and proud,
Yet with bowed head, and gentle ear inclining
To her who moves as in a sable cloud
Of her own waving hair—the star-flowers shining
Through its soft waves, like planets when they keep
Reflected watch beneath the sunless deep.

IV.

Her brow is pure and pale, her eyes
Deep as the unfathomed sky,
Her lips, from which the sweet words rise
Like flames from incensed sacrifice,
Quiver with untold thoughts, that lie

Burning beneath their crimson glow,
As mute and deathless lightnings sleep
At sunset, where the dyes are deep

On Rosa's purple snow ;

She moves all beautiful and bright,
With little in that form of light
To set the seal of mortal birth,

Or own her earthy—of the earth,
Unless it be one strange quick trace

That checks the glory of her face,
A wayward meaning, dimly shed,

A shadow, scarcely felt, ere fled ;

A spot upon the brow, a spark
Under those eyes subdued and dark ;

A low short discord in the tone
Of music round her being thrown ;

A mystery more conceived than seen ;

A wildness of the word and mien ;

The sign of wilder work within,

Which may be sorrow—must be sin.

V.

Slowly they moved that knight and dame,
Where hanging thickets quench and tame
 The rivers flash and cry ;
Mellowed among the leafage came
Its thunder voice—its flakes of flame
 Drifted undisturbing by,
 Sunk to a twilight and a sigh.
Their path was o'er the entangled rest
 Of dark night flowers that underneath
Their feet as their dim bells were pressed,
 Sent up warm pulses of soft breath.
Ranged in sepulchral ranks above,
Grey spires of shadowy cypress clove,
With many a shaft of sacred gloom,
The evening heaven's mysterious dome ;
Slowly above their columns keen
Rolled on its path that starred serene ;
A thousand fountains soundless flow
With imaged azure moved below ;

And through the grove and o'er the tide
Pale forms appeared to watch, to glide,
O'er whose faint limbs the evening sky
Had cast like life its crimson dye ;
Was it not life—so bright—so weak—
That flushed the bloodless brow and cheek,
And bade the lips of wreathed stone
Kindle to all but breath and tone ?
It moved—it heaved—that stainless breast !
Ah ! what can break such marble rest ?
It was a shade that passed—a shade,
It was not bird nor bough that made,
Nor dancing leaf, nor falling fruit,
For where it moves—that shadow, gray and chill,
The birds are lulled—the leaves are mute—
The air is cold and still.

VI.

Slowly they moved, that dame and knight,
As one by one the stars grew bright ;
Fondly they moved—they did not mark
They had a follower strange and dark.

Just where the leaves their feet disturbed
Sunk from their whispering tune,
(It seemed beneath a fear that curbed
Their motion very soon),
A shadow fell upon them, cast
By a less visible form that passed
Between them and the moon.
Was it a fountain's falling shiver ?
It moveth on—it will not stay—
Was it a mist wreath of the river ?
The mist hath melted all away,
And the risen moon is full and clear,
And the moving shadow is marked and near.
See ! where the dead leaves felt it pass,
There are footsteps left on the bended grass—
Footsteps as of an armed heel,
Heavy with links of burning steel.

VII.

Fondly they moved, that dame and knight,
By the gliding river's billow light,

Their lips were mute, their hands were given,

Their hearts did hardly stir,

The maid had raised her eyes to heaven,

But his were fallen on her.

They did not heed, they did not fear

That follower strange that trod so near,

An armed form whose cloudy mail

Flashed as it moved with radiance pale ;

So gleams the moonlit torrent through

It's glacier's deep transparent blue ;

Quivering and keen its steps of pride

Shook the sheathed lightning at its side,

And waved its dark and drifted plume,

Like fires that haunt the unholy tomb

Where cursed with crime the mouldering dead,

Lie restless in their robes of lead.

What eye shall seek, what soul can trace

The deep death-horror of its face ?

The trackless, livid smile that played

Beneath the casque's concealing shade ;

The angered eye's unfathomed glare,

(So sleep the fountains of despair,

Beneath the soul whose sins unseal,
The wells of all it fears to feel.)
The sunk, unseen, all-seeing gloom,
Scarred with the ravage of the tomb,
The passions that made life their prey,
Fixed on the feature's last decay,
The pangs that made the human heart their slave,
Frozen on the changeless aspect of the grave.

VIII.

And still it followed where they went,
That unregarding pair ;
It kept on them its eyes intent,
And from their glance the sickened air
Shrank, as if tortured. Slow, how slow,
The knight and lady trod ;
You had heard their hearts beat just as loud
As their footsteps on the sod.
They paused at length in a leafless place,
Where the moonlight shone on the maiden's face ;

Still as an image of stone she stood,
Though the heave of her breath, and the beat of her
 blood
Murmured and mantled to and fro,
Like the billows that heave on a hill of snow,
When the midnight winds are short and low.
The words of her lover came burning and deep,
 And his hand was raised to the holy sky ;
Can the lamps of the universe bear or keep,
 False witness or record on high ?
He starts to his feet from the spot where he knelt,
What voice hath he heard, what fear hath he felt ?
His lips in their silence are bloodless and dry,
And the love-light fails from his glazed eye.

IX.

Well might he quail, for full displayed
Before him rose that dreadful shade,
And o'er his mute and trembling trance
Waved its pale crest and quivering lance ;
And traced, with pangs of sudden pain,
The form of words upon his brain ;

“Thy vows are deep, but still thou bears’t the chain,
Cast on thee by a deeper—vowed in vain;
Thy love is fair, but fairer forms are laid,
Cold and forgotten, in the cypress shade;
Thy arm is strong, but arms of stronger trust,
Repose unnerved, undreaded in the dust;
Around thy lance shall bend the living brave,
Then arm thee for the challenge of the grave.”

X.

The sound had ceased, the shape had passed away,
Silent the air and pure the planet’s ray.
They stood beneath the lonely breathing night,
The lovely lady and the lofty knight;
He moved in shuddering silence by her side,
Or wild and wandering to her words replied,
Shunning her anxious eyes on his that bent:
“Thou didst not see it, ’twas to me ’twas sent.
To me,—but why to me?—I knew it not,
It was no dream, it stood upon the spot,

Where"— Then with lighter tone and bitter smile,
"Nothing, beloved,—a pang that did beguile
My spirit of its strength, a dream, a thought,
A fancy of the night." And though she sought
More reason of his dread, he heard her not,
For, mingling with those words of phantom fear,
There was another echo in his ear,
An under murmur deep and clear,
The faint low sob of one in pain,
"May the faith thou hast forgotten
Bind thee with its broken chain."

PART FOURTH.

I.

'Tis morn !—in clustered rays increased—
Exulting rays, that deeply drink
The starlight of the East,
And strew with crocus dyes the brink
Of those blue streams that pause and sink

Far underneath their heavenly strand—
Soft capes of vapour, ribbed like sand.
Along the Loire white sails are flashing,
Through stars of spray their dark oars dashing ;
The rocks are reddening one by one,
The purple sandbanks flushed with sun,
And crowned with fire on crags and keep,
Amboise ! above thy lifted steep,
Far lightning o'er the subject vale,
Blaze thy broad range of ramparts pale !
Through distance azure as the sky,
That vale sends up its morning cry.
From countless leaves, that shaking shade
Its tangled paths of pillared glade,
And ceaseless fan, with quivering cool,
Each gentle stream and slumbrous pool,
That catch the leaf-song as they flow,
In tinkling echo pure and low,
* Clear, deep, and moving, as the night.
And starred with orbs of lily light.

Nor are they leaves alone that sing,
Nor waves alone that flow ;
The leaves are lifted on the wing
Of voices from below ;
The waters keep, with shade subdued,
The image of a multitude—
A merry crowd promiscuous met,
Of every age and heart united—
Gray hairs with golden twined, and yet
With equal mien and eyes delighted,
With thoughts that mix, and hands that lock,
Behold they tread, with hurrying feet,
Along the thousand paths that meet
Beneath Amboise's rock ;
For there upon the meadows wide,
That couch along the river-side,
Are pitched a snowy flock
Of warrior tents, like clouds that rest,
Through champaigns of the quiet west,
When, far in distance, stretched serene,
The evening sky lies calm and green.

Amboise's lord must bear to-day
His love-gage through the rival fray ;
Through all the coasts of fiery France
His challenge shook the air,
That none could break so true a lance,
Nor for a dame so fair.

II.

The lists are circled round with shields,
Like lily-leaves that lie
On forest pools in clustered fields
Of countless company.
But every buckler's bosses black
Dash the full beams of morning back,
In orbèd wave of welded lines,
With mingled blaze of crimson signs,
And light of lineage high :
As sounds that gush when thoughts are strong,
But words are weak with tears,
Awoke, above the warrior throng,
The wind among the spears ;

Afar in hollow surge they shook,
As reeds along some summer brook,
Glancing beneath the July moon,
All bowed, and touched in pleasant tune ;
Their steely lightning passed and played
Alternate with the cloudy shade
Of crested casques, and flying flakes
Of horse-manes, twined like sable snakes,
And misty plumes in darkness drifted,
And chargèd banners broadly lifted,
Purpling the air with storm-tints cast
Down through their undulation vast,
Wide the billowy army strewing,
Like to flags of victory
From some wretched Armada's ruin,
Left to robe the sea.

III.

As the morning star new risen
In a circle of calm sky,
Where the white clouds stand to listen
For the spherèd melody

Of her planetary path,
And her soft rays pierce the wrath
Of the night storms stretched below,
Till they sink like wreaths of snow,
(Lighting heaven with their decay)
Into sudden silentness—
Throned above the stormy stress
Of that knightly host's array,
Goddess-formed, as one whom mortals
Need but gaze on to obey,
Distant seen, as through the portals
Of some temple gray ;
The glory of a marble dream,
Kindling the eyes that gaze, the lips that pray—
One gentle lady sat, retiring but supreme.

IV.

Upon her brow there was no crown,
Upon her robe no gem ;
Yet few were there who would not own
Her queen of earth, and them,

Because that brow was crowned with light

As with a diadem,

And her quick thoughts, as they did rise,

Were in the deep change of her eyes,

Traced one by one, as stars that start

Out of the orb'd peace of night,

Still drooping as they dart,

And her sweet limbs shone heavenly bright,

Following with undulation white,

The heaving of her heart.

High she sat, and all apart,

Meek of mien, with eyes declined,

Less like one of mortal mind,

Than some changeless spirit shrined

In the memories of men,

Whom the passions of its kind

Cannot hurt nor move again.

V.

High she sat in meekness shaming,

All of best and brightest there,

Till the herald's voice, proclaiming

Her the fairest of the fair,
Rang along the morning air ;
And then she started, and that shade,
Which in the moonlit garden glade
Had marked her with its mortal stain,
Did pass upon her face again,
And in her eye a sudden flash
Came and was gone ; but it were rash
To say if it were pride or pain ;
And on her lips a smile, scarce worn,
Less, as it seemed, of joy than scorn,
Was with a strange quick quivering mixed,
Which passed away, and left them fixed
In calm, persisting, colorless,
Perchance too perfect to be peace
A moment more, and still serene
Returned, yet changed—her mood and mien ;
What eye that traceless change could tell,
Slight, transient,—but unspeakable !
She sat, divine of soul and brow ;
It passed,—and all is human now

VI.

The multitude, with loud acclaim,
Caught up the lovely lady's name ;
Thrice round the lists arose the cry ;
But when it sunk, and all the sky
Grew doubly silent by its loss,
A slow strange murmur came across
The waves of the reposing air,
A deep, soft voice that everywhere
Arose at once, so lowly clear,
That each seemed in himself to hear
Alone, and fixed with sweet surprise,
Did ask around him, with his eyes,
If t'were not some dream-music dim
And false, that only rose for him.

VII.

“ Oh, lady Queen,—Oh, lady Queen !

Fairest of all who tread

The soft earth carpet green,

Or breathe the blessings shed

By the stars and tempest free ;
Know thou, oh, lady Queen,
Earth hath borne, sun hath seen,
Fairer than thee.

“ The flush of beauty burneth
In the palaces of earth,
But thy lifted spirit scorneth
All match of mortal birth :
And the nymph of the hill,
And the naiad of the sea,
Were of beauty quenched and chill,
Beside thee !

“ Where the gray cypress shadows
Move onward with the moon,
Round the low mounded meadows,
And the grave-stones, whitely hewn,
Gleam like camp-fires through the night,
There, in silence of long swoon,
In the horror of decay ;
With the worm for their delight,
And the shroud for their array,

With the garland on their brow,
And the black cross by their side,
With the darkness for their beauty,
And the dust for their pride,
With the smile of baffled pain
On the cold lips half apart,
With the dimness on the brain,
And the peace upon the heart ;
Even sunk in solemn shade,
Underneath the cypress tree,
Lady Queen, there are laid
Fairer than thee !”

VIII.

It passed away, that melodie,
But none the minstrel there could see ;
The lady sat still calm of thought,
Save that there rose a narrow spot
Of crimson on her cheek ;
But then, the words were far and weak,
Perchance she heard them not.
The crowd still listening, feared to speak,

And only mixed in sympathy
Of pressing hand and wondering eye,
And left the lists all hushed and mute,
For every wind of heaven had sunk
To that aerial lute.
The ponderous banners, closed and shrunk,
Down from their listless lances hung,
The windless plumes were feebly flung.
With lifted foot, the listening steed,
Did scarcely fret the fern,
And the challenger on his charmed steed
Sat statue-like and stern,
Till mixed with martial trumpet-strain,
The herald's voice arose again,
Proclaiming that Amboise's lord
Dared by the trial of the sword,
The bravest knights of France, to prove
Their fairer dame or truer love,—
And ere the brazen blast had died,
That strange sweet singing voice replied,
So wild that every heart did keep
Its pulse to time the cadence deep :

IX.

“ Where the purple swords are swiftest,
And the rage of death unreigned.
Lord of battle, though thou liftest
Crest unstooped, and shield unstained,
Vain before thy footsteps fail,
Useless spear and rended mail,
Shuddering from thy glance and blow,
Earth’s best armies sink like snow ;
Know thou this ; unmatched, unmet,
Might hath children mightier yet.

The chapel vaults are deadly damp,
Their air is breathless all,
The downy bats they clasp and cramp
Their cold wings to the wall ;
The bright-eyed eft, from cranny and cleft,
Doth noiselessly pursue
The twining light of the death-worms white,
In the pools of the earth dew ;

The downy bat,—the death-worm white,
And the eft with its sable coil—
They are company good for a sworded knight.
In his rest from the battle toil ;
The sworded knight is sunk in rest,
With the cross-hilt in his hand ;
But his arms are folded o'er his breast
As weak as ropes of sand.
His eyes are dark, his sword of wrath
Is impotent and dim ;
Dark lord, in this thy victor path,
Remember him."

X.

The sounds sunk deeply,—and were gone,
And for a time the quiet crowd
Hung on the long departing tone,
Of wailing in the morning cloud,
In spirit wondering and beguiled ;
Then turned with steadfast gaze to learn
What recked he, of such warning wild—
Amboise's champion stern.

But little to their sight betrayed
The visor bars and plumage shade ;
The nearest thought he smiled ;
Yet more in bitterness than mirth,
And held his eyes upon the earth
With thoughtful gaze, half sad, half keen,
As they would seek beneath the screen
Of living turf and golden bloom,
The secrets of its under tomb.

XI.

A moment more, with burning look,
High in the air his plume he shook,
And waved his lance as in disdain,
And struck his charger with the rein,
And loosed the sword-hilt to his grasp,
And closed the visor's grisly clasp,
And all expectant sate and still ;
The herald blew his summons shrill,
Keen answer rose from list and tent,
For France had there her bravest sent,

With hearts of steel, and eyes of flame,
Full armed the knightly concourse came ;
They came like storms of heaven set free,
They came like surges of the sea,

Resistless, dark and dense,
Like surges on a sable rock,
They fell with their own fiery shock,
Dashed into impotence.

O'er each encounter's rush and gloom,
Like meteor rose Amboise's plume,
As stubble to his calm career ;
Crashed from his breast the splintered spear,
Before his charge the war-horse reeled,
And bowed the helm, and sunk the shield,
And checked the heart, and failed the arm ;
And still the herald's loud alarm

Disturbed the short delay—
On, chevaliers ! for fame, for love,—
For these dark eyes that burn above
The field of your affray !

XII.

Six knights had fallen, the last in death,—
Deeply the challenger drew his breath.
The field was hushed,—the wind that rocked
His standard staff grew light and low.
A seventh came not. He unlocked
His visor clasp, and raised his brow
To catch its coolness. Marvel not
If it were pale with weariness,
For fast that day his hand had wrought
Its warrior work of victory ;
Yet, one who loved him might have thought
There was a trouble in his eye,
And that it turned in some distress
Unto the quiet sky.
Indeed that sky was strangely still,
And through the air unwonted chill
Hung on the heat of noon ;
Men spoke in whispers, and their words
Came brokenly, as if the chords
Of their hearts were out of tune ;

And deeper still, and yet more deep
The coldness of that heavy sleep
Came on the lulled air. And men saw
In every glance, an answering awe
Meeting their own with doubtful change
Of expectation wild and strange.
Dread marvel was it thus to feel
The echoing earth, the trumpet-peal,
The thundering hoof, the crashing steel,
Cease to a pause so dead,
They heard the aspens moaning shiver,
And the low tinkling of the river
Upon its pebble bed.
The challenger's trump rang long and loud,
And the light upon his standard proud
Grew indistinct and dun ;
The challenger's trump rang long and loud,
And the shadow of a narrow cloud
Came suddenly o'er the sun.

XIII.

A narrow cloud of outline quaint,
Much like a human hand ;
And after it, with following faint,
Came up a dull grey lengthening band
Of small cloud billows, like sea sand,
And then out of the gaps of blue,
Left moveless in the sky, there grew
Long snaky knots of sable mist,
Which counter winds did vex and twist,
Knitted and loosed, and tossed and tore,
Like passive weeds on that sandy shore ;
And these seemed with their touch to infect
The sweet white upper clouds, and checked
Their pacing on the heavenly floor,
And quenched the light which was to them
As blood and life, singing the while
A fitful requiem,
Until the hues of each cloud isle
Sank into one vast veil of dread,
Coping the heaven as if with lead,

With drag'd pale edges here and there,
Through which the noon's transparent glare
Fell with a dusky red.
And all the summer voices sank
To let that darkness pass ;
The weeds were quiet on the bank,
The cricket in the grass ;
The merry birds the buzzing flies,
The leaves of many lips,
Did make their songs a sacrifice
Unto the noon eclipse.

XIV.

The challenger's trump rang long and loud—
Hark ! as its notes decay !
Was it out of the earth—or up in the cloud ?—
Or an echo far away ?
Soft it came and none knew whence—
Deep, melodious and intense,
So lightly breathed, so wildly blown,
Distant it seemed—yet everywhere
Possessing all the infinite air—
One quivering trumpet tone !

With slow increase of gathering sway,
Londer along the wind it lay ;
It shook the woods, it pressed the wave,
The guarding rocks through chasm and cave
 Roared in their fierce reply.
It rose, and o'er the lists at length
Crashed into full tempestuous strength,
Shook through its storm-tried turrets high
 Amboise's mountain home,
And the broad thunder-vaulted sky
 Clanged like a brazen dome.

XV.

Unchanged, unchilled in heart and eye ;
The challenger heard that dread reply ;
His head was bowed upon his breast,
And on the darkness in the west
His glance dwelt patiently ;
Out of that western gloom there came
A small white vapor, shaped like flame,
Unscattering, and on constant wing ;
Rode lonely, like a living thing,

Upon its stormy path ; it grew,
And gathered as it onward drew—
It paused above the lists, a roof
Inwoven with a lightning woof
Of undulating fire, whose trace,
Like corpse-fire on a human face,
Was mixed of light and death ; it sank
Slowly ; the wild war-horses shrank
Tame from the nearing flash ; their eyes
Glared the blue terror back, it shone
On the broad spears, like wavering wan
Of unaccepted sacrifice.
Down to the earth the smoke-cloud rolled—
Pale shadowed through sulphurous fold,
Banner and armor, spear and plume
Gleamed like a vision of the tomb.
One form alone was all of gloom—
In deep and dusky arms arrayed,
Changeless alike through flash and shade,
Sudden within the barrier gate
Behold, the Seventh champion sate !

He waved his hand—he stooped his lance—
The challenger started from his trance ;
He plunged his spur—he loosed his rein—
A flash—a groan—a woman's cry—
And up to the receiving sky
The white cloud rose again !

XVI.

The white cloud rose—the white cloud fled—
The peace of heaven returned in dew,
And soft and far the noontide shed
Its holiness of blue.
The rock, the earth, the wave, the brake
Rejoiced beneath that sweet succeeding ;
No sun nor sound can warm or wake
One human heart's unheeding.
Stretched on the dark earth's bosom, chill,
Amboise's lord lay stark and still.
The heralds raise him, but to mark
The last light leave his eyeballs dark—

The last blood dwindle on his cheek—
They turned ; a murmur wild and weak
 Passed on the air, in passion broken,
The faint low sob of one in pain—
 “ Lo ! the faith thou hast forgotten
Binds thee with its broken chain ! ”

PART FIFTH.

I.

The mists, that mark the day's decline,
 Have cooled and lulled the purple air ;
The bell, from Saint Cecilia's shrine,
 Hath tolled the evening hour of prayer ;
With folded veil, and eyes that shed
Faint rays along the stones they tread,
And bosom stooped, and step subdued,
Came forth that ancient sisterhood ;
Each bearing on her lips along
Part of the surge of a low song,—
A wailing requiem, wildly mixed
 With suppliant cry, how weak to win,

From home so far—from fate so fixed,

A Spirit dead in sin !

Yet yearly must they meet, and pray

For her who died—how long ago ?

How long—'twere only Love could know ;

And she, ere her departing day,

Had watched the last of Love's decay ;

Had felt upon her fading cheek

None but a stranger's sighs ;

Had none but stranger souls to seek

Her death-thoughts in her eyes ;

Had none to guard her couch of clay,

Or trim her funeral stone,

Save those, who, when she passed away,

Felt not the more alone.

II.

And years had seen that narrow spot

Of death-sod levelled and forgot,

Ere question came of record kept,

Or how she died—or where she slept.

The night was wild, the moon was late—
A lady sought the convent gate ;
The midnight chill was on her breast,
 The dew was on her hair,
And in her eye there was unrest,
 And on her brow despair ;
She came to seek the face, she said,
 Of one deep injured. One by one
The gentle sisters came, and shed
 The meekness of their looks upon
Her troubled watch. “ I know them not,
 I know them not,” she murmured still :
“ Are then her face—her form forgot ? ”
 “ Alas ! we lose not when we will
The thoughts of an accomplished ill ;
The image of our love may fade,
But what can quench a victim’s shade ?

III.

“ She comes not yet. She will not come.
 I seek her chamber ; ” and she rose

With a quick start of grief, which some
Would have restrained ; but the repose
Of her pale brow rebuked them. “ Back,”
She cried, “ the path,—the place,—I know,—
Follow me not—though broad and black
The night lies on that lonely track.
There moves forever by my side
A darker spirit for my guide ;
A broader curse—a wilder woe,
Must gird my footsteps as I go.”

IV.

Sternly she spoke, and, shuddering, sought
The cloister arches, marble-wrought,
That send, through many a trembling shaft
The deep wind's full, melodious draught,
Round the low space of billowy turf
Where funeral roses flash like surf,
O'er those who share the convent grave,
Laid each beneath her own green wave.

V.

From stone to stone she passed, and spelt
The letters with her fingers felt ;
The stains of time are drooped across
Those mouldering names, obscure with moss ;
The hearts where once they deeply dwelt,
With music's power to move and melt,
Are stampless too—the fondest few
Have scarcely kept a trace more true.

VI.

She paused at length beside a girth
Of osiers overgrown and old ;
And with her eyes fixed on the earth,
Spoke slowly and from lips as cold
As ever met the burial mould.

VII.

“I have not come to ask for peace
From thee, thou unforgiving clay !
The pangs that pass—the throbs that cease
From such as thou, in their decay,

Bequeath them that repose of wrath

So dark of heart, so dull of ear,

That bloodless strength of sworded sloth,

That shows not mercy, knows not fear,

And keeps its death-smile of disdain

Alike for pity, as for pain.

But, galled by many a ghastly link,

That bound and brought my soul to thee,

I come to bid thy vengeance drink

The wine of this my misery.

Look on me as perchance the dead

Can look ; through soul and spirit spread

Before thee ; go thou forth, and tread

The lone fields of my life, and see

Those dark large flocks of restless pangs

They pasture, and the thoughts of thee,

That shepherd them, and teach their fangs

To eat the green, and guide their feet

To trample where the banks are sweet

And judge betwixt us, which is best,

My sleepless torture, or thy rest ;

And which the worthier to be wept,
The fate I caused, or that I kept.
I tell thee, that my steps must stain
With more than blood, their path of pain ;
And I would fold my weary feet
More gladly in thy winding sheet,
And wrap my bosom in thy shroud,
And dash thy darkness on the crowd
Of terrors in my sight, and sheathe
Mine ears from their confusion loud,
And cool my brain with cypress wreath
More gladly from its pulse of blood,
Than ever bride with orange bud
Clouded her moony brow. Alas !
This osier fence I must not pass.
Wilt thou not thank me—that I dare
To feel the beams and drink the breath
That curse me out of Heaven, nor share
The cup that quenches human care,
The sacrament of death ;
But yield thee this, thy living prey
Of erring soul and tortured clay,

To feed thee, when thou com'st to keep
Thy watch of wrath around my sleep,
Or turn the shafts of daylight dim,
With faded breast and frozen limb?

VIII.

“Yet come, and be, as thou hast been,
Companion ceaseless—not unseen,
Though gloomed the veil of flesh between
Mine eyes and thine, and fast and rife
Around me flashed the forms of life :
I knew them by their change—for one
I did not lose, I could not shun,
Through laughing crowd, and lighted room,
Through listed field, and battle's gloom,
Through all the shapes and sounds that press
The Path, or wake the Wilderness ;
E'en when He came, mine eyes to fill,
Whom Love saw solitary still,
For ever, shadowy by my side,
I heard thee murmur, watched thee glide ;
But what shall now thy purpose bar ?
The laughing crowd is scattered far,

The lighted hall is left forlorn,
The listed field is white with corn,
And he, beneath whose voice and brow
I could forget thee—is—as thou."

IX.

She spoke, she rose, and from that hour,
The peasant groups that pause beside
The chapel walls at eventide,
To catch the notes of chord and song
That unseen fingers form, and lips prolong,
Have heard a voice of deeper power,
Of wilder swell, and purer fall,
More sad, more modulate, than all.
It is not keen, it is not loud,
But ever heard alone,
As winds that touch on chords of cloud
Across the heavenly zone,
Then chiefly heard, when drooped and drowned
In strength of sorrow, more than sound ;
That low articulated rush
Of swift, but secret passion, breaking

From sob to song, from gasp to gush ;
Then failing to that deadly hush,
That only knows the wilder waking—
That deep, prolonged, and dream-like swell,
So full that rose—so faint that fell,
So sad—so tremulously clear—
So checked with something worse than fear.
Whose can they be ?
Go, ask the midnight stars, that see
The secrets of her sleepless cell,
For none but God and they can tell
What thoughts and deeds of darkened choice
Gave horror to that burning voice—
That voice, unheard save thus, untaught
The words of penitence or prayer ;
The grey confessor knows it not ;
The chapel echoes only bear
Its burst and burthen of despair ;
And pity's voice hath rude reply,
From darkened brow and downcast eye,
That quench the question, kind or rash,
With rapid shade, and reddening flash ;

Or, worse, with the regardless trance
Of sealèd ear, and sightless glance,
That fearful glance, so large and bright,
That dwells so long, with heed so light,
When far within, its fancy lies,
Nor movement marks, nor ray replies,
Nor kindling dawn, nor holy dew
Reward the words that soothe or sue.

X.

Restless she moves ; beneath her veil
That writhing brow is sunk and shaded ;
Its touch is cold—its veins are pale—
Its crown is lost—its lustre faded ;
Yet lofty still, though scarcely bright,
Its glory burns beneath the blight
Of wasting thought, and withering crime,
And curse of torture and of time ;
Of pangs—of pride, endured—degraded—
Of guilt unchecked, and grief unaided :
Her sable hair is slightly braided,

Warm, like south wind, its foldings float
Round her soft hands and marble throat ;
How passive these, how pulseless this,

That love should lift, and life should warm !

Ah ! where the kindness, or the kiss,

Can break their dead and drooping charm !

Perchance they were not always so :

That breast hath sometimes movement deep,
Timed like the sea that surges slow

Where storms have trodden long ago ;

And sometimes, from their listless sleep,

• Those hands are harshly writhed and knit,

As grasping what their frenzied fit

Deemed peace to crush, or death to quit.

And then the sisters shrink aside ;

They know the words that others hear
Of grace, or gloom—to charm or chide,

Fall on her inattentive ear,

As falls the snowflake on the rock,

That feels no chill, and knows no shock ;

Nor dare they mingle in her mood,
So dark, and dimly understood ;
And better so, if, as they say,
'Tis something worse than solitude :
For some have marked, when that dismay
Had seemed to snatch her soul away,
That in her eye's unquietness
There shone more terror than distress ;
And deemed they heard, when soft and dead,
By night they watched her sleepless tread,
Strange words addressed, beneath her breath,
As if to one who heard in death,
And, in the night wind's sound and sigh,
Imagined accents of reply.

* * * * *

XI.

The sun is on his western march,
His rays are red on shaft and arch ;
With hues of hope their softness dyes
The image with the lifted eyes,

Where, listening still, with transeèd smile,
Cecilia lights the glimmering aisle ;
So calm the beams that flushed her rest
Of ardent brow, and virgin breast
Whose chill they pierced, but not profaned,
And seemed to stir, what scarce they stained,
So warm the life, so pure the ray :
Such she had stood, ere snatched from clay,
When sank the tones of sun and sphere,
Deep melting on her mortal ear ;
And angels stooped, with fond control,
To write the rapture on her soul.

XII.

Two sisters, at the statue's feet,
Paused in the altar's arched retreat,
As risen but now from earnest prayer—
One aged and grey—one passing fair ;
In changeful gush of breath and blood,
Mute for a time the younger stood ;
Then raised her head and spoke : the flow
Of sound was measured, stern, and slow ;

XIII.

“Mother ! thou sayest she died in strife
Of heavenly wrath, and human woe ;
For me, there is not that in life
Whose loss could ask, or love could owe
As much of pang as now I show ;
But that the book which angels write
Within men’s spirits day by day
That diary of judgment-light
That cannot pass away,
Which, with cold ear and glazing eye,
Men hear and read before they die,
Is open now before me set ;
Its drifting leaves are red and wet
With blood and fire, and yet, methought,
Its words were music, were they not
Written in darkness.

I confess !

Say’st thou ? The sea shall yield its dead,
Perchance my spirit its distress ;
Yet there are paths of human dread
That none but God should trace or tread ;

Men judge by a degraded law ;

With Him I fear not : He who gave
The sceptre to the passion, saw
The sorrow of the slave.

He made me, not as others are,

Who dwell, like willows by a brook,
That see the shadow of one star

Forever with serenest look
Lighting their leaves,—that only hear
Their sun-stirred boughs sing soft and clear,
And only live, by consciousness
Of waves that feed, and winds that bless.

Me—rooted on a lonely rock,

Amidst the rush of mountain rivers,
He, doomed to bear the sound and shock
Of shafts that rend and storms that rock,

The frost that blasts, and flash that shivers ;
And I am desolate and sunk.

A lifeless wreck—a leafless trunk,
Smitten with plagues, and seared with sin,
And black with rottenness within,

But conscious of the holier will
That saved me long, and strengthens still.

XIV.

Mine eyes are dim, they scarce can trace
The rays that pierce this lonely place ;
But deep within their darkness dwell
A thousand thoughts they knew—too well.
Those orb'd towers obscure and vast,*
That light the Loire with sunset last ;
Those fretted groups of shaft and spire
That crest Amboise's cliff with fire,
When, far beneath, in moonlight fail
The winds that shook the pausing sail ;
The panes that tint with dyes divine
The altar of St. Hubert's shrine ;
The very stone on which I knelt ;
When youth was pure upon my brow,
Though word I prayed, or wish I felt
I scarce remember now.

* Note, page 167.

Methought that there I bowed to bless

A warrior's sword—a wanderer's way :

Ah ! nearer now, the knee would press

The heart for which the lips would pray.

The thoughts were meek, the words were low—

I deemed them free from sinful stain ;

It might be so. I only know

These were unheard, and those were vain.

XV.

“ That stone is raised ;—where once it lay

Is built a tomb of marble grey :*

Asleep within the sculptured veil

Seems laid a knight in linkèd mail ;

Obscurely laid in powerless rest,

The latest of his line,

Upon his casque he bears no crest,

Upon his shield no sign.

I've seen the day when through the blue

Of broadest heaven his banner flew,

* Note, page 167.

And armies watched through farthest fight,
The stainless symbol's stormy light

Wave like an angel's wing.

Ah ! now a scorned and scathèd thing,
It's silken folds the worm shall fret,
The clay shall soil, the dew shall wet,
Where sleeps the sword that once could save,

And droops the arm that bore ;
Its hues must gird a nameless grave ;
Nor wind shall wake, nor lance shall wave,

Nor glory gild it more :
For he is fallen—oh ! ask not how,
Or ask the angels that unlock
The inmost grave's sepulchral rock ;
I could have told thee once, but now
'Tis madness in me all, and thou
Wouldst deem it so, if I should speak.
And I am glad my brain is weak ;—
Ah, this is yet its only wrong,
To know too well—to feel too long.

XVI.

“ But I remember how he lay
When the rushing crowd were all away ;
And how I called, with that low cry
He never heard without reply ;
And how there came no sound, nor sign,
And the feel of his dead lips on mine ;
And when they came to comfort me,
I laughed, because they could not see
The stain of blood, or print of lance,
To write the tomb upon the trance.
I saw, what they had heeded not,
Above his heart a small black spot ;
Ah, woe ! I knew how deep within
That stamp of death, that seal of sin
Had struck with mortal agony
The heart so false—to all but me.

XVII.

“ Mother, methinks my soul can say
It loved as well as woman’s may ;

And what I would have given, to gain
The answering love, to count were vain ;
I know not—what I gave I know—
My hope on high, my all below.
But hope and height of earth and heaven,
Or highest sphere to angels given,
Would I surrender, and take up
The horror of this cross and cup
I bear and drink, to win the thought
That I had failed in what I sought.
Alas ! I won—rejoiced to win
The love whose every look was sin,
Whose every dimly worded breath
Was but the distant bell of death
For her who heard, for him who spoke.

Ah ! though those hours were swift and few,
The guilt they bore, the vow they broke,
Time cannot punish—nor renew.

XVIII.

“ They told me long ago that thou
Hadst seen, beneath this very shade

Of mouldering stone that wraps us now,
The death of her whom he betrayed.
Thine eyes are wet with memory,—
In truth 'tis fearful sight to see
E'en the last sands of sorrow run,
Though the fierce work of death be done,
And the worst woe that fate can will
Bids but its victim to be still.
But I beheld the darker years
That first oppressed her beauty's bloom ;
The sickening heart and silent tears
That asked and eyed her early tomb ;
I watched the deepening of her doom,
As, pulse by pulse, and day by day,
The crimson life-tint waned away
And timed her bosom's quickening beat,
That hastened only to be mute,
And the short tones, each day more sweet,
That made her lips like an Eolian lute,
When winds are saddest ; and I saw
The kindling of the unearthly awe

That touched those lips with frozen light,
The smile, so bitter, yet so bright,
Which grief, that sculptured, seals its own,
Which looks like life, but stays like stone ;
Which checks with fear the charm it gives,
And loveliest burns, when least it lives,—
All this I saw. Thou canst not guess
How woman may be merciless.
One word from me had rent apart
The chains that chafed her dying heart :
Closer I clasped the links of care,
And learned to pity—not to spare.

XIX.

She might have been avenged ; for, when
Her woe was aidless among men,
And tooth of scorn and brand of shame
Had seared her spirit, soiled her name,
There came a stranger to her side,
Or—if a friend, forgotten long,
For hearts are frail, when hands divide.
There were who said her early pride

Had cast his love away with wrong ;
But that might be a dreamer's song.
He looked like one whom power or pain
Had hardened, or had hewn, to rock
That could not melt nor rend again,
Unless the staff of God might shock,
And burst the sacred waves to birth
That deck with bloom the Desert's dearth--
That dearth, that knows nor breeze, nor balm,
Nor feet that print, nor sounds that thrill,
Though cloudless was his soul, and calm,
It was the Desert still ;
And blest the wildest cloud had been
That broke the desolate serene,
And kind the storm, that farthest strewed
Those burning sands of solitude.

XX.

" Darkly he came, and in the dust
Had writ, perchance, Amboise's shame :
I knew the sword he drew was just,
And in my fear a fiend there came ;

It deepened first, and then derided
The madness of my youth ;
I deemed not that the God, who guided
The battle blades in truth,
Could gather from the earth the guilt
Of holy blood in secret spilt.

XXI.

“I watched at night the feast flow high ;
I kissed the cup he drank to die ;
I heard at morn the trumpet call
Leap cheerily round the guarded wall ;
And laughed to think how long and clear
The blast must be, for him to hear.
He lies within the chambers deep,
Beneath Amboise’s chapel floor,
Where slope the rocks in ridges steep,
Far to the river shore ;
Where thick the summer flowers are sown,
And, even within the deadening stone,
A living ear can catch the close
Of gentle waves forever sent,

To soothe, with lull and long lament,
That murdered knight's repose :
And yet he sleeps not well ;—but I
Am wild, and know not what I say ;—
My guilt thou knowest—the penalty
Which I have paid, and yet must pay,
Thou canst not measure. O'er the day
I see the shades of twilight float—
My time is short. Believest thou not ?
I know my pulse is true and light,
My step is firm, mine eyes are bright ;
Yet see they—what thou canst not see,
The open grave, deep dug for me ;
The vespers we shall sing to-night
My burial hymn shall be :
But what the path by which I go,
My heart desires yet dreads to know.
But this remember, (these the last
Of words I speak for earthly ear :
Nor sign nor sound my soul shall cast,
Wrapt in its final fear) :

For him, forgiving, brave and true,
Whom timeless and unshrived I slew,
For him be holiest masses said,
And rites that sanctify the dead,
With yearly honor paid.
For her, by whom he was betrayed,
Nor blood be shed, nor prayer be made,—
The cup were death—the words were sin,
To judge the soul they could not win,
And fall in torture o'er the grave
Of one they could not wash, nor save.”

* * * * *

XXII.

The vesper beads are told and slipped,
The chant has sunk by choir and crypt.
That circle dark—they rise not yet ;
With downcast eyes, and lashes wet,
They linger, bowed and low ;
They must not part before they pray
For her who left them on this day
How many years ago !

XXIII.

They knelt within the marble screen,
Black-robed and moveless, hardly seen,
Save by their shades that sometimes shook
 Along the quiet floor,
Like leaf-shades on a waveless brook
 When the wind walks by the shore.
The altar lights that burned between,
Were seven small fire-shafts, white and keen,
 Intense and motionless.
They did not shake for breeze nor breath,
 They did not change, nor sink, nor shiver ;
They burned as burn the barbs of death
 At rest within their angel's quiver.
From lip to lip, in chorus kept,
The sad sepulchral music swept,
While *one* sweet voice unceasing led :
Were there but mercy for the dead,
Such prayer had power to soothe—to save—
Ay, even beneath the binding grave ;

So pure the springs of faith that fill
The spirit's fount, at last unsealed.
A corpse's ear, an angel's will,
That voice might wake, or wield.
Keener it rose, and wilder yet,
The lifeless flowers that wreath and fret
Column and arch with garlands white,
Drank the deep fall of its delight,
Like purple rain at evening shed
On Sestri's cedar-darkened shore,
When all her sunlit waves lie dead,
And far along the mountains fled,
Her clouds forget the gloom they wore,
Till winding vale and pasture low
Pant underneath their gush and glow ;
So sank, so swept, on earth and air,
That single voice of passion'd prayer.
The hollow tombs gave back the tone,
The roof's grey shafts of stalwart stone
Quivered like chords, the keen night blast
Grew tame beneath the sound. Tis past :

That failing cry—how feebly flung !

What charm is laid on her who sung ?

Slowly she rose—her eyes were fixed
On the void, penetrable air ;

And in their glance was gladness mixed
With terror, and an under glare :

What human soul shall seize or share

The thoughts it might avow ?
It might have been—ah ! is it now—
Devotion ?—or despair ?

XXIV.

With steps whose short white flashes keep

Beneath the shade of her loose hair,
With measured pace, as one in sleep

Who heareth music in the air,
She left the sister's circle deep
Their anxious eyes of troubled thought
Dwelt on her but she heeded not ;
Fear struck and breathless as they gazed,
Before her steps their ranks divided ;
Her hand was given—her face was raised

As if to one who watched and guided—
Her form emerges from the shade ;
Lo ! she will cross, where full displayed
Against the altar light 'tis thrown ;
She crosses now—but not alone.

Who leads her ? Lo ! the sisters shrink
Back from that guide with limbs that sink,
And eyes that glaze, and lips that blench ;

For, seen where broad the beams were cast
By what it dimmed, but did not quench,

A dark, veiled form there passed—
Veiled with the nun's black robe, that shed
Faint shade around its soundless tread ;
Moveless and mute the folds that fell,
Nor touch can change, nor breeze repel.
Deep to the earth its head was bowed,
Its face was bound with the white shroud ;
One hand upon its bosom pressed—
One seemed to lead its mortal guest ;
The hand it held lay bright and bare,
Cold as itself, and deadly fair.

What oath had bound the fatal troth
Whose horror seems to seal them both ?
Each powerless in the grasp they give,
This to release, and that to live.

XXV.

Like sister sails, that drift by night
Together on the deep,
Seen only where they cross the light
That pathless waves must pathlike keep
From fisher's signal fire, or pharos steep.

XXVI.

Like two thin wreaths that autumn dew
Hath framed of equal paced cloud,
Whose shapes the hollow night can shroud,
Until they cross some caverned place
Of moon illumined blue,
That live an instant, but must trace
Their onward way, to waste and wane
Within the sightless gloom again,

Where, scattered from their heavenly pride
Nor star nor storm shall gild or guide,—
So shape and shadow, side by side
The consecrated light had crossed.
Beneath the aisle an instant lost,
Behold ! again they glide
Where yonder moonlit arch is bent
Above the marble steps' descent,—
Those ancient steps, so steep and worn,
Though none descend, unless it be
Bearing, or borne, to sleep, or mourn,
The faithful or the free.
The shade yon bending cypress cast,
Stirred by the weak and tremulous air,
Kept back the moonlight as they passed.
The rays returned : they were not there.
Who follows ? Watching still, to mark
If ought returned—(but all was dark)
Down to the gate, by two and three,
The sisters crept, how fearfully !

They only saw, when there they came,
Two wandering tongues of waving flame,
O'er the white stones, confusedly strewed
Across the field of solitude.

NOTES.

Stanza II. Line 4.

“The image with the lifted eyes.”—I was thinking of the St. Cecilia of Raphael at Bologna, turned into marble—were it possible—where so much depends on the entranced darkness of the eyes. The shrine of St. Cecilia is altogether imaginary; she is not a favorite saint in matters of dedication. I don't know why.

Stanza XIV. Line 5.

“Those orbèd towers, obscure and vast.”—The circular tower, in Amboise, is so large as to admit of a spiral ascent in its interior, which two horsemen may ride up abreast. The chapel, which crowns the precipice, though small, is one of the loveliest bits of rich detail in France. It is terminated by a wooden spire. It is dedicated to St. Hubert, a grotesque piece of carving above the entrance representing his rencontre with the sacred stag.

Stanza XV. Line 2.

“Is built a tomb of marble grey.”—There is no such tomb now in existence, the chapel being circular, and unbroken in design; in fact, I

have my doubts whether there ever was anything of the kind, the lady being slightly too vague in her assertions to deserve unqualified credit.

Stanza XXI. Line 42.

“Nor blood be shed.”—In the sacrifices of masses the priest is said to offer Christ for the quick and dead.

Stanza XXIII. Line 26.

“Like purple rain.”—I never saw such a thing but once, on the mountains of Sestri, in the gulf of Genoa. The whole western half of the sky was one intense amber color, the air crystalline and cloudless, the other half, grey with drifting showers. At the instant of sunset, the whole mass of rain turned of a deep rose-color, the consequent rainbow being not varied with the seven colors, but one broad belt of paler rose; the other tints being so delicate as to be overwhelmed by the crimson of the rain.

THE TEARS OF PSAMMENITUS.

[CAMBYSES, the son of Cyrus, made war on Psammenitus of Egypt, and deposed him. His sons were sentenced to death, his daughters to slavery. He saw his children pass to death and to dishonor without apparent emotion, but *wept* on observing a noble, who had been his companion, ask alms of the Persians. Cambyses sent to inquire the reason of his conduct. The substance of his reply was as follows :—]

SAY ye I wept ? I do not know :—

There came a sound across my brain,
Which was familiar long ago ;
And through the hot and crimson stain
That floods the earth and chokes the air,
I saw the waving of white hair—
The palsy of an aged brow ;
I should have known it once, but now
One desperate hour hath dashed away
The memory of my kingly day.

Mute, weak, unable to deliver
That bowed distress of passion pale,
I saw that forehead's tortured quiver,
And watched the weary footstep fail,
With just as much of sickening thrill
As marked my heart was human still ;
Yes, though my breast is bound and barred
With pain, and though that heart is hard,
And though the grief that should have bent
Hath made me, what ye dare not mock,
The being of untamed intent,
Between the tiger and the rock,
There's that of pity's outward glow
May bid the tear atone,
In mercy to another's woe
For mockery of its own ;
It is not cold,—it is not less,
Though yielded in unconsciousness.
And it is well that I can weep,
For in the shadow, not of sleep,
Through which, as with a vain endeavor,
These aged eyes must gaze forever,

Their tears can cast the only light
That mellows down the mass of night ;
For they have seen the curse of sight
My spirit guards the dread detail
And wears their vision like a veil.
They saw the low Pelusian shore
Grow warm with death and dark with gore.

When on those widely watered fields,
Shivered and sunk, betrayed, oppressed,
Ionian sword and Carian crest,*

And Egypt's shade of shields :
They saw, oh God ! they still must see
That dream of long dark agony,
A vision passing, never past,
A troop of kingly forms, that cast
Cold quivering shadows of keen pain
In bars of darkness o'er my brain :
I see them move,—I hear them tread,
Each his untroubled eyes declining,

* The Ionians and Carians were faithful auxiliaries of the Egyptian kings, from the beginning of the reign of Psammenitus. The helmet crest was invented by the Carians.

Though fierce in front, and swift and red
The Eastern sword is sheathless shining.
I hear them tread,—the earth doth not !
Alas ! its echoes have forgot
The fiery steps that shook the shore
With their swift pride in days of yore.
In vain, in vain, in wrath arrayed,
Shall Egypt wave her battle blade ;
It cannot cleave the dull-death shade,
Where, sternly checked and lowly laid,
Despised, dishonored, and betrayed,
That pride is past, those steps are stayed.
Oh ! would I were as those who sleep
In yonder island lone and low.*
Beside whose shore, obscure and deep,
Sepulchral waters flow,
And wake, with beating pause, like breath,
Their pyramidal place of death ;

* Under the hill, on which the pyramids of Cheops were erected, were excavated vaults, around which a stream from the Nile was carried by a subterraneous passage. These were sepulchres for the kings, and Cheops was buried there himself.—HEROD., II., 187.

For it is cool and quiet there,
And on the calm frankincensed clay
Passes no change, and this despair
Shrinks like the baffled worm, their prey
Alike impassive. I forget
The thoughts of him who sent ye here :
Bear back these words, and say, though yet
The shade of this unkingly fear
Hath power upon my brow, no tear
Hath quenched the curse within mine eyes,
And by that curse's fire,
I see the doom that shall possess
His hope, his passion, his desire,
His life, his strength, his nothingness.
I see across the desert led,*
A plumed host, on whom distress
Of fear and famine hath been shed ;

* Cambyses, after subduing Egypt, led an army against the Ethiopians. He was checked by famine. Persisting in his intention, until the troops were obliged to kill every tenth man for food, he lost the greater part of his army.

Before them lies the wilderness,
Behind, along the path they tread,
If death make desolation less,
There lie a company of dead
Who cover the sand's hot nakedness
With a cool moist bed of human clay,
A soil and a surface of slow decay :
Through the dense and lifeless heap
Irregularly rise
Short shuddering waves that heave and creep,
Like spasms that plague the guilty sleep,
And where the motion dies,
A moaning mixes with the purple air,
They have not fallen in fight ; the trace
Of war hath not passed by ;
There is no fear on any face,
No wrath in any eye.
They have laid them down with bows unbent,
With swords unfleshed and innocent,
In the grasp of that famine whose gradual thrill
Is fiercest to torture and longest to kill :

Stretched in one grave on the burning plain
Coiled together in knots of pain,
Where the dead are twisted in skeleton writhe,
With the mortal pangs of the living and lithe ;
Soaking into the sand below,
With the drip of the death-dew, heavy and slow,
Mocking the heaven that heard no prayer,
With the lifted hand and the lifeless stare—
With the lifted hand, whose tremorless clay,
Though powerless to combat, is patient to pray.
And the glance that reflects, in its vain address,
Heaven's blue from its own white lifelessness ;
Heaped for a feast on the venomous ground,
For the howling jackal and herded hound ;
With none that can watch and with few that will weep
By the home they have left, or the home they must
keep,
The strength hath been lost from the desolate land,
Once fierce as the simoon, now frail as the sand.
Not unavenged : their gathered wrath
Is dark along its desert path,

Nor strength shall bide, nor madness fly
The anger of their agony,
For every eye, though sunk and dim,
And every lip, in its last need,
Hath looked and breathed a plague on him
Whose pride they fell to feed.
The dead remember well and long,
And they are cold of heart and strong,
They died, they cursed thee ; not in vain !
Along the river's reedy plain
Behold a troop,—a shadowy crowd—
Of godlike spectres, pale and proud ;
In concourse calm they move and meet,
The desert billows at their feet,
Heave like the sea when, deep distressed,
The waters pant in their unrest.
Robed in a whirl of pillared sand
Avenging Ammon glides supreme ;*

* Cambyses sent 50,000 men to burn the temple of the Egyptian Jove or Ammon. They plunged into the desert and were never heard of more. It was reported they were overwhelmed with sand.

The red sun smoulders in his hand
And round about his brows, the gleam,
As of a broad and burning fold
Of purple wind, is wrapt and rolled.*
With failing frame and lingering tread,
Stern Apis follows, wild and worn ; †
The blood by mortal madness shed,
Frozen on his white limbs anguish-torn.
What soul can bear, what strength can brook
The God-distress that fills his look ?
The dreadful light of fixed disdain,
The fainting wrath, the flashing pain
Bright to decree or to confess
Another's fate—its own distress—

* The simoon is rendered visible by its purple tone of color.

† The god Apis occasionally appeared in Egypt under the form of a handsome bull. He imprudently visited his worshippers immediately after Cambyses had returned from Ethiopia with the loss of his army and reason. Cambyses heard of his appearance, and insisted on seeing him. The officiating priests introduced Cambyses to the bull. The king looked with little respect on a deity whose divinity depended on the number of hairs in his tail, drew his dagger, wounded Apis in the thigh, and scourged all the priests. Apis died. From that time the insanity of Cambyses became evident, and he was subject to the violent and torturing passions described in the succeeding lines.

A mingled passion and appeal,
Dark to inflict and deep to feel.

Who are these that flitting follow
Indistinct and numberless ?

As through the darkness, cold and hollow,
Of some hopeless dream, there press
Dim, delirious shapes that dress
Their white limbs with folds of pain ;
See the swift mysterious train—

Forms of fixed, embodied feeling,
Fixed, but in a fiery trance,
Of wildering mien and lightning glance,
Each its inward power revealing
Through its quivering countenance ;
Visible living agonies,

Wild with everlasting motion,
Memory with her dark dead eyes,
Tortured thoughts that useless rise,

Late remorse and vain devotion,
Dreams of cruelty and crime,
Unmoved by rage, untamed by time,

Of fierce design, and fell delaying,
 Quenched affection, strong despair
Wan disease, and madness playing
 With her own pale hair.
The last, how woeful and how wild !
 Enrobed with no diviner dread
Than that one smile, so sad, so mild,
 Worn by the human dead ;
A spectre thing, whose pride of power
 Is vested in its pain
Becoming dreadful in the hour
 When what it seems was slain.
Bound with the chill that checks the sense,
 It moves in spasm-like spell :
It walks in that dead impotence,
 How weak, how terrible !
Cambyses, when thy summoned hour
Shall pause on Ecbatana's Tower,
Though barbed with guilt, and swift, and fierce,
Unnumbered pangs thy soul shall pierce

The last, the worst thy heart can prove,
Must be that brother's look of love ; *
That look that once shone but to bless,
Then changed, how mute, how merciless !
His blood shall bathe thy brow, his pain
Shall bind thee with a burning chain,
His arms shall drag, his wrath shall thrust
Thy soul to death, thy throne to dust ;
Thy memory darkened with disgrace,
Thy kingdom wrested from thy race, †
Condemned of God, accursed of men,
Lord of my grief, remember then,
The tears of him—who will not weep again.

* Cambyses caused his brother Smerdis to be slain ; suspecting him of designs on the throne. This deed he bitterly repented of on his death-bed, being convinced of the innocence of his brother.

† Treacherously seized by Smerdis the Magus, afterwards attained by Darius Hystaspes, through the instrumentality of his groom. Cambyses died in the Syrian Ecbatana, of a wound accidentally received in the part of the thigh where he had wounded Apis.

THE TWO PATHS.

I.

THE paths of life are rudely laid
Beneath the blaze of burning skies ;
Level and cool, in cloistered shade,
The church's pavement lies.
Along the sunless forest glade
Its gnarled roots are coiled like crime,
Where glows the grass with freshening blade,
Thine eyes may track the serpent slime ;
But there thy steps are unbetrayed,
The serpent waits a surer time.

II.

The fires of earth are fiercely blent,
Its suns arise with scorching glow ;
The church's light hath soft descent,
And hues like God's own bow.

The brows of men are darkly bent,
Their lips are wreathed with seorn and guile ;
But pure, and pale, and innocent
The looks that light the marble aisle—
From angel eyes, in love intent,
And lips of everlasting smile.

III.

Lady, the fields of earth are wide,
And tempt an infant's foot to stray :
Oh ! lead thy loved one's steps aside,
Where the white altar lights his way.
Around his path shall glance and glide,
A thousand shadows false and wild ;
Oh ! lead him to that surer Guide,
Than sire, serene, or mother mild,
Whose childhood quelled the age of pride,
Whose Godhead called the little child.

IV.

So when thy breast of love untold,
That warmed his sleep of infaney,

Shall only make the marble cold,
 Beneath his aged knee ;
From its steep throne of heavenly gold
 Thy soul shall stoop to see
His grief, that cannot be controlled,
 Turning to God from thee—
Cleaving with prayer the cloudy fold,
 That veils the sanctuary.

THE OLD WATER-WHEEL.

It lies beside the river ; where its marge
Is black with many an old and oarless barge,
And yeasty filth, and leafage wild and rank
Stagnate and batten by the crumbling bank.

Once, slow revolving by the industrious mill,
It murmured, only on the Sabbath still ;
And evening winds its pulse-like beating bore
Down the soft vale, and by the winding shore.

Sparkling around its orbèd motion flew,
With quick, fresh fall, the drops of dashing dew,
Through noon-tide heat that gentle rain was flung,
And verdant round the summer herbage sprung.

Now dancing light and sounding motion cease,
In these dark hours of cold continual peace ;

Through its black bars the unbroken moonlight flows,
And dry winds howl about its long repose ;

And mouldering lichens creep, and mosses grey
Cling round its arms, in gradual decay,
Amidst the hum of men—which doth not suit
That shadowy circle, motionless and mute.

So, by the sleep of many a human heart,
The crowd of men may bear their busy part,
Where withered, or forgotten, or subdued,
Its noisy passions have left solitude.

Ah, little can they trace the hidden truth !
What waves have moved it in the vale of youth !
And little can its broken chords avow
How they once sounded. All is silent now.

THE DEPARTED LIGHT.

THOU know'st the place where purple rocks receive
The deepened silence of the pausing stream ;
And myrtles and white olives interweave
Their cool grey shadows with the azure gleam
Of noontide ; and pale temple columns cleave
Those waves with shafts of light (as through a dream
Of sorrow, pierced the memories of loved hours—
Cold and fixed thoughts that will not pass away)
All chapleted with wreaths of marble flowers,
Too calm to live,—too lovely to decay.
And hills rise round, pyramidal and vast,
Like tombs built of blue heaven, above the clay
Of those who worshipped here, whose steps have past
To silence—leaving o'er the waters cast
The light of their religion. There, at eve,
That gentle dame would walk, when night-birds make

The starry myrtle blossoms pant and heave
With waves of ceaseless song ; she would awake
The lulled air with her kindling thoughts, and leave
Her voice's echo on the listening lake ;
The quenched rays of her beauty would deceive
Its depths into quick joy. Hill, wave, and brake
Grew living as she moved : I did believe
That they were lovely, only for her sake ;
But now—she is not there—at least, the chill
Hath passed upon her which no sun shall break.
Stranger, my feet must shun the lake and hill :—
Seek them,—but dream not they are lovely still.

AGONIA.

WHEN our delight is desolate,
And hope is overthrown ;
And when the heart must bear the weight
Of its own love alone ;

And when the soul, whose thoughts are deep,
Must guard them unrevealed,
And feel that it is full, but keep
That fullness calm and sealed ;

When love's long glance is dark with pain—
With none to meet or cheer ;
And words of woe are wild in vain
For those who cannot hear ;

When earth is dark and memory
Pale in the heaven above,—
The heart can bear to lose its joy,
But not to cease to love.

But what shall guide the choice within,
Of guilt or agony,—
When to remember is to sin,
And to forget—to die !

THE LAST SONG OF ARION.

ὦ λυγείας μορον ἀηδόνος

** * * κύκνου δίκην*

τόν ὕδατον μέλψασα θανασίμον γόνον.

THE circumstances which led to the introduction of Arion to his Dolphin are differently related by Herodotus and Lucian. Both agree that he was a musician of the highest order, born at Methymna, in the island of Lesbos, and that he acquired fame and fortune at the court of Periander of Corinth. Herodotus affirms that he became desirous of seeing Italy and Sicily, and having made a considerable fortune in those countries, hired a Corinthian vessel to take him back to Corinth. When halfway over the gulf the mariners conceived the idea of seizing the money and throwing the musician into the sea.

Arion started several objections, but finding that they were overruled, requested that he might be permitted to sing them a song.

Permission being granted he wreathed himself and his harp with flowers, sang, says Lucian, in the sweetest way in the world, and leaped into the sea.

The historian proceeds with less confidence to state that a dolphin carried him safe ashore. Lucian agrees with this account except in one particular: he makes no mention of the journey to Sicily, and supposes Arion to have been returning from Corinth to his native Lesbos when the attack was made on him. I have taken him to Sicily with

Herodotus, but prefer sending him straight home. He is more interesting returning to his country than paying his respects at the court of Corinth.

I.

Look not upon me thus impatiently,
Ye children of the deep ;
My fingers fail, and tremble as they try
To stir the silver sleep with song,
Which underneath the surge ye sweep,
These lulled and listless chords must keep—
Alas—how long !

II.

The salt sea wind has touched my harp ; its thrill
Follows the passing plectrum, low and chull,
Woe for the wakened pulse of Ocean's breath,
That injures these with silence—me with death.
Oh wherefore stirred the wind on Pindus's chain,
When joyful morning called me to the main ?
Flashed the keen oars—our canvas filled and free,
Shook like white fire along the purple sea,

Fast from the helm the shattering surges flew,
Pale gleamed our path along their cloven blue ;
And orient path, wild wind and purple wave,
Pointed and urged and guided to the grave.

III.

Ye winds ! by far Methymna's steep,
I loved your voices long,
And gave your spirits power to keep
Wild syllables of song,
When, folded in the crimson shade
That veils Olympus' cloud-like whiteness,
The slumber of your life was laid
In the hush of its own lightness,
Poised on the voiceless ebb and flow
Of the beamy-billowed summer snow,
Still at my call ye came—
Through the thin wreaths of undulating flame
That panting in their heavenly home,
With crimson shadows flush the foam
Of Adramyttium, round the ravined hill,
Awakened with one deep and living thrill,

Ye came and with your steep descent,
The hollow forests waved and bent,
 Their leaf-lulled echoes caught the winding call.
Through incensed glade and rosy dell,
Mixed with the breath-like pause and swell
 Of waters following in eternal fall,
In azure waves, that just betray
The music quivering in their spray
Beneath its silent seven-fold arch of day
 High in pale precipices hung
 The lifeless rocks of rigid marble rung,
•Waving the cedar crests along their brows sublime,
 Swift ocean heard beneath, and flung
His tranced and trembling waves in measured time
Along his golden sands with faintly falling chime.

IV.

Alas ! had ye forgot the joy I gave,
 That ye did hearken to my call this day ?
Oh ! had ye slumbered—when your sleep could save.
 I would have fed you with sweet sound for aye,
 Now ye have risen to bear my silent soul away.

V.

I heard ye murmur through the Etnæan caves,
When joyful dawn had touched the topmost dome,
I saw ye light along the mountain waves
Far to the east, your beacon fires of foam,
And deemed ye rose to bear your weary minstrel home.
Home ? it shall be that home indeed,
Where tears attend and shadows lead
The steps of man's return ;
Home ! woe is me, no home I need,
Except the urn.
Behold—beyond these billows' flow,
I see Methymna's mountains glow ;
Long, long desired, their peaks of light
Flash on my sickened soul and sight,
And heart and eye almost possess
Their vales of long lost pleasantness ;
But eye and heart, before they greet
That land, shall cease to burn and beat.
I see, between the sea and land,
The winding belt of golden sand ;

But never may my footsteps reach
The brightness of that Lesbian beach,
Unless, with pale and listless limb,
Stretched by the water's utmost brim,
Naked, beneath my native sky,
With bloodless brow, and darkened eye,
An unregarded ghastly heap,
For bird to tear and surge to sweep,
Too deadly calm—too coldly weak
To reckon of billow, or of beak.

VI.

My native isle ! When I have been
Reft of my love, and far from thee
My dreams have traced, my soul hath seen
Thy shadow on the sea,
And waked in joy, but not to seek
Thy winding strand, or purple peak.
For strand and peak had waned away
Before the desolating day,
On Acro-Corinth redly risen,

That burned above Ægina's bay,
And laughed upon my palace prison.
How soft on other eyes it shone,
When light, and land, were all their own,
I looked across the eastern brine,
I knew *that* morning was not mine.

VII.

But thou art near me now, dear isle !
And I can see the lightning smile
By thy broad beach, that flashes free
Along the pale lips of the sea.
Near, nearer, louder, breaking, beating,
The billows fall with ceaseless shower ;
It comes,—dear isle !—our hour of meeting—
Oh God ! across the soft eyes of the hour
Is thrown a black and blinding veil ;
Its steps are swift, its brow is pale,
Before its face, behold—there stoop,
From their keen wings, a darkening troop
Of forms like unto it—that fade
Far in unfathomable shade,

Confused, and limitless, and hollow,
It comes, but there are none that follow,—
It pauses, as they paused, but not
Like them to pass away,
For I must share its shadowy lot,
And walk with it, where wide and grey,
That caverned twilight chokes the day,
And, underneath the horizon's starless line,
Shall drink, like feeble dew, its life and mine.

VIII.

Farewell, sweet harp ! for lost and quenched
Thy swift and sounding fire shall be ;
And these faint lips be mute and blenched,
That once so fondly followed thee.
Oh ! deep within the winding shell
The slumbering passions haunt and dwell,
As memories of its ocean tomb
Still gush within its murmuring gloom ;
But closed the lips and faint the fingers
Of fiery touch, and woven words,

To rouse the flame that clings and lingers
Along the loosened chords.
Farewell ! thou silver-sounding lute,
I must not wake thy wildness more,
When I and thou lie dead, and mute,
Upon the hissing shore.

IX.

The sounds I summon fall and roll
In waves of memory o'er my soul ;
And there are words I should not hear,
That murmur in my dying ear,
Distant all, but full and clear,
Like a child's footstep in its fear,
Falling in Colono's wood
When the leaves are sere ;
And waves of black, tumultuous blood
Heave and gush about my heart,
Each a deep and dismal mirror
Flashing back its broken part
Of visible, and changeless terror ;

And fiery foam-globes leap and shiver
Along that crimson, living river ;
Its surge is hot, its banks are black,
And weak, wild thoughts that once were bright,
And dreams, and hopes of dead delight,
Drift on its desolating track,
And lie along its shore :
Oh ! who shall give that brightness back,
Or those lost hopes restore ?
Or bid that light of dreams be shed
On the glazed eye-balls of the dead ?

X.

That light of dreams ! my soul hath cherished
One dream too fondly, and too long,
Hope—dread—desire—delight have perished,
And every thought whose voice was strong
To curb the heart to good or wrong ;
But that sweet dream is with me still
Like the shade of an eternal hill,
Cast on a calm and narrow lake,

That hath no room except for it—and heaven :

It doth not leave me, nor forsake ;
And often with my soul hath striven
To quench or calm its worst distress,
Its silent sense of loneliness.

And must it leave me now ?
Alas ! dear lady, where my steps must tread,
What veils the echo or the glow
That word can leave, or smile can shed,
Among the soundless, lifeless dead ?
Soft o'er my brain the lulling dew shall fall,
While I sleep on, beneath the heavy sea,
Coldly,—I shall not hear though thou shouldst call.
Deeply,—I shall not dream,—not e'en of thee.

XI.

And when my thoughts to peace depart
Beneath the unpeaceful foam,
Wilt thou remember him, whose heart
Hath ceased to be thy home ?
Nor bid thy breast its love subdue
For one no longer fond nor true ;

Thine ears have heard a treacherous tale,
My words were false,—my faith was frail.

I, feel the grasp of death's white hand

Laid heavy on my brow,

And from the brain those fingers brand,

The chords of memory drop like sand,

And faint in muffled murmurs die,

The passionate word, the fond reply,

The deep redoubled vow.

Oh ! dear Ismene flushed and bright,

Although thy beauty burn,

It cannot wake to love's delight

The crumbling ashes quenched and white,

Nor pierce the apathy of night

Within the marble urn :

Let others wear the chains I wore,

And worship at the unhonored shrine—

For me, the chain is strong no more,

No more the voice divine :

Go forth, and look on those that live,

And robe thee with the love they give,

But think no more of mine :

Or think of all that pass thee by,
With heedless heart and unveiled eye,
That none can love thee *less* than I.

XII.

Farewell ; but do not grieve ; thy pain
Would seek me where I sleep,
Thy tears would pierce like rushing rain,
The stillness of the deep.
Remember, if thou wilt, but do not weep.
Farewell, beloved hills, and native isle.
Farewell to earth's delight to heaven's smile ;
Farewell to sounding air, to purple sea ;
Farewell to light,—to life,—to love,—to thee.

THE HILLS OF CARRARA.*

I.

AMIDST a vale of springing leaves,

Where spreads the vine its wandering root,

And cumbrous fall the autumnal sheaves,

And olives shed their sable fruit,

And gentle winds, and waters never mute,

Make of young boughs and pebbles pure

One universal lute,

And bright birds, through the myrtle copse obscure,

Pierce with quick notes, and plumage dipped in dew,

The silence and the shade of each lulled avenue.

II.

Far in the depths of voiceless skies,

Where calm and cold the stars are strewed,

* The mountains of Carrara, from which nearly all the marble now used in sculpture is derived, form by far the finest piece of hill scenery I know in Italy. They rise out of valleys of exquisite richness, being themselves singularly desolate, magnificent in form and noble in elevation, but without forests on their flanks and without one blade of grass on their summits.

The peaks of pale Carrara rise.

Nor sound of storm, nor whirlwind rude,
Can break their chill of marble solitude ;

The crimson lightnings round their crest
May hold their fiery feud—

They hear not, nor reply ; their chasmed rest
No flowret decks, nor herbage green, nor breath
Of moving thing can change their atmosphere of death.

III.

But far beneath, in folded sleep,
Faint forms of heavenly life are laid,

With pale brows and soft eyes, that keep
Sweet peace of unawakened shade,

Whose wreathed limbs, in robes of rock arrayed,
Fall like white waves on human thought,

In fitful dreams displayed ;
Deep through their secret homes of slumber sought,
They rise immortal, children of the day,
Gleaming with godlike forms on earth, and her decay.

IV.

Yes, where the bud hath brightest germ,

And broad the golden blossoms glow,

There glides the snake and works the worm

And black the earth is laid below.

Ah ! think not thou the souls of men to know ;

By outward smiles in wildness worn ;

The words that jest at woe

Spring not less lightly, though the heart be torn,

The mocking heart, that scarcely dares confess

Even to itself, the strength of its own bitterness.

Nor deem that they whose words are cold,

Whose brows are dark, have hearts of steel,

The couchant strength, untraced, untold,

Of thoughts they keep and throbs they feel,

May need an answering music to unseal,

Who knows what waves may stir the silent sea,

Beneath the low appeal

From distant shores, of winds unfelt by thee ?

What sounds may wake within the winding shell,

Responsive to the charm of those who touch it well !

THE BATTLE OF MONTENOTTE.

“ My patent of nobility ” (said Napoleon) “ dates from the Battle of Montenotte.”

I.

SLOW lifts the night her starry host
Above the mountain chain
That guards the grey Ligurian coast,
And lights the Lombard plain ;
That plain, that softening on the sight
Lies blue beneath the balm of night,
With lapse of rivers lulled, that glide
In lustre broad of living tide,
Or pause for hours of peace beside
The shores they double, and divide,
To feed with heaven's reverted hue
The clustered vine's expanding blue :

With crystal flow, for evermore,
They lave a blood-polluted shore ;
Ah ! not the snows, whose wreaths renew
Their radiant depth with stainless dew,
Can bid their banks be pure, or bless
The guilty land with holiness.

II.

In stormy waves, whose wrath can reach
The rocks that back the topmost beach,
The midnight sea falls wild and deep
Around Savona's marble steep,
 And Voltri's crescent bay.
What fiery lines are these, that flash
Where-fierce the breakers curl and crash,
 And fastest flies the spray ?
No moon has risen to mark the night,
Nor such the flakes of phosphor light
That wake along the southern wave,
By Baia's cliff and Capri's cave,
 Until the dawn of day :

The phosphor flame is soft and green
Beneath the hollow surges seen ;
But these are dyed with dusky red
Far on the fitful surface shed ;
And evermore, their glance between,
The mountain gust is deeply stirred
With low vibration, felt, and heard,
Which winds and leaves confuse, in vain,
It gathers through their maze again,
Redoubling round the rocks it smote,
Till falls in fear the night-bird's note,
And every sound beside is still,
But plash of torrent from the hill,
And murmur by the branches made
That bend above its bright cascade.

III.

Hark, hark ! the hollow Apennine
Laughs in his heart afar ;
Through all his vales he drinks like wine
The deepening draught of war ;

For not with doubtful burst, or slow,
That thunder shakes his breathless snow,
But ceaseless rends, with rattling stroke,
The veils of white volcano-smoke
That o'er Legino's ridges rest,
And writhe in Merla's vale :
There lifts the Frank his triple crest,
Crowned with its plumage pale,
Though, clogged and dyed with stains of
death,
It scarce obeys the tempest's breath,
And darker still, and deadlier press
The war-clouds on its weariness.
Far by the bright Bormida's banks
The Austrian cheers his chosen ranks,
In ponderous waves, that, where they check
Rise o'er their own tumultuous wreck,
Recoiling—crashing—gathering still
In rage around that Island hill.
Where stand the moveless Few—
Few—fewer as the moments flit :

Though shaft and shell their columns split
As morning melts the dew,

Though narrower yet their guarding grows,
And hot the heaps of carnage close,
In death's faint shade and fiery shock,
They stand, one ridge of living rock,
Which steel may rend, and wave may wear,
And bolt may crush, and blast may tear,

But none can strike from its abiding.
The flood, the flash, the steel, may bear
Perchance destruction—not despair,
And death—but not dividing.

What matter ? while their ground they keep,
Though here a column—there an heap—
Though these in wrath—and those in sleep,
If all are *there*.

IV.

Charge, D'Argenteau ! Fast flies the night,
The snows look wan with inward light :
Charge, D'Argenteau ! Thy kingdom's power
Wins not again this hope, nor hour :

The force—the fate of France is thrown
Behind those feeble shields,
That ridge of death-defended stone
Were worth a thousand fields !
In vain—in vain ! Thy broad array
Breaks on their front of spears like spray
Thine hour hath struck—the dawning red
Is o'er thy wavering standards shed ;
A darker dye thy folds shall take
Before its utmost beams can break.

V.

Out of its Eastern fountains
The river of day is drawn,
And the shadows of the mountains
March downward from the dawn,—
The shadows of the ancient hills
Shortening as they go,
Down beside the dancing rills
Wearily and slow.

The morning wind the mead hath kissed ;

It leads in narrow lines

The shadows of the silver mist,

To pause among the pines.

But where the sun is calm and hot,

And where the wind hath peace,

There is a shade that pauseth not,

And a sound that doth not cease.

The shade is like a sable river

Broken with sparkles bright ;

The sound is like dead leaves that shiver

In the decay of night.

VI.

Together came with pulse-like beat

The darkness, and the tread ;

A motion calm—a murmur sweet,

Yet deathful both, and dread ;

Poised on the hill, a fringed shroud,

It wavered like the sea,

Then clove itself, as doth a cloud,

In sable columns three.

They fired no shot—they gave no sign,—
They blew no battle peal,
But down they came, in deadly line,
Like whirling bars of steel.
As fades the forest from its place,
Beneath the lava flood,
The Austrian host, before their face,
Was melted into blood :
They moved, as moves the solemn night,
With hilling, and release,
Before them, all was fear and flight,
Behind them, all was peace :
Before them flashed the roaring glen
With bayonet and brand ;
Behind them lay the wrecks of men,
Like sea-weed on the sand.

VII.

But still, along the cumbered heath,
A vision strange and fair
Did fill the eyes that failed in death,
And darkened in despair ;

Where blazed the battle wild and hot
A youth, deep-eyed and pale,
Did move amidst the storm of shot,
As the fire of God through hail,
He moved, serene as spirits are,
And dying eyes might see
Above his head a crimson star
Burning continually.

* * * * *

VIII.

With bended head, and breathless tread,
The traveller tracks that silent shore,
Oppressed with thoughts that seek the dead,
And visions that restore,
Or lightly trims his pausing bark,
Where lies the ocean lulled and dark,
Beneath the marble mounds that stay
The strength of many a bending bay,
And lace with silver lines the flow
Of tideless waters to and fro,
As drifts the breeze, or dies.

That scarce recalls its lightness, left
In many a purple-curtained cleft,
Whence to the softly lighted skies
Low flowers lift up their dark blue eyes,
To bring by fits the deep perfume
Alternate, as the bending bloom

Diffuses or denies.

Above, the slopes of mountain shine,
Where glows the citron, glides the vine,
And breathes the myrtle wildly bright,
And aloes lift their lamps of light,
And ceaseless sunbeams clothe the calm
Of orbèd pine and vaulted palm,
Dark trees, that sacred order keep,
And rise in temples o'er the steep—
Eternal shrines, whose columned shade
Though winds may shake, and frosts may fade,
And dateless years subdue,
Is softly builded, ever new,

By angel hands, and wears the dread
And stillness of a sacred place.

A sadness of celestial grace,

A shadow, God-inhabited.

IX.

And all is peace, around, above,

The air all balm—the light all love,

Enduring love, that burns and broods

Serenely o'er these solitudes,

Or pours at intervals a part

Of Heaven upon the wanderer's heart,

Whose subject sold and quiet thought

Are open to be touched or taught,

By mute address of bud and beam

Of purple peak and silver stream—

By sounds that fall at nature's choice,

And things whose being is their voice,

Innumerable tongues that teach

The will and ways of God to men,

In waves that beat the lonely beach,

And winds that haunt the homeless glen,

Where they, who ruled the rushing deep,

The restless and the brave,

Have left along their native steep
The ruin, and the grave.

X.

And he who gazes while the day
Departs along the boundless bay,
May find against its fading streak
The shadow of a single peak,
Seen only when the surges smile,
And all the heaven is clear,
That sad and solitary isle.*
Where, captive, from his red career,
He sank—who shook the hemisphere,
Then, turning from the hollow sea,
May trace, across the crimsoned height
That saw his earliest victory,
The purple rainbow's resting light,
And the last lines of storm that fade
Within the peaceful evening-shade.

* Elba.

NOTES.

STANZA 3.—Line 9.

That o'er Legino's ridges rest.

The Austrian centre, 10,000 strong, had been advanced to Montenotte in order, if possible, to cut asunder the French force which was following the route of the Corniche. It encountered at Montenotte, only Colonel Rampon, at the head of 1,200 men, who, retiring to the redoubt at Monte Legino, defended it against the repeated attacks of the Austrians until nightfall—making his soldiers swear to conquer or die. The Austrian General Roccavina was severely wounded, and his successor, D'Argenteau, refused to continue the attack. Napoleon was lying at Savona, but set out after sunset with the divisions of Massena and Serrurier, and occupied the heights at Montenotte. At daybreak the Imperialists found themselves surrounded on all sides, and were totally defeated, with the loss of two thousand prisoners, and above one thousand killed and wounded. [April 12, 1796.]

This victory, the first gained by Napoleon, was the foundation of the success of the Italian campaign. Had Colonel Rampon been compelled to retire from Monte Legino, the fate of the world would probably have been changed.—*Vide* Alison, ch. 20.

STANZA 7.—Line 6.

Where lies the ocean lulled and dark.

The view given in the engraving, though not near the scene of the battle, is very characteristic of the general features of the coast. The ruins in the centre are the Chateau de Cornolet, near Mentoni; the sharp dark promontory running out beyond, to the left, is the Capo St. Martin; that beyond it is the promontory of Monaco. Behind the

hills, on the right, lies the Bay of Nice and the point of Antibes. The dark hills in the extreme distance rise immediately above Frejus. Among them winds the magnificent Pass de L'Esterelle, which, for richness of southern forest scenery, and for general grace of mountain outline, surpasses anything on the Corniche itself.

STANZA 9.—Line 7.

That solitary isle.

Elba is said to be visible from most of the elevated points of this coast. From the citadel of Genoa I have seen what was asserted to be Elba. I believe it to have been Corsica.

A WALK IN CHIAMOUNI.

TOGETHER on the valley, white and sweet,
The dew and silence of the morning lay :
Only the tread of my disturbing feet
Did break with printed shade and patient beat
The crispèd stillness of the meadow way ;
And frequent mountain waters, welling up
In crystal gloom beneath some mouldering stone,
Curdled in many a flower-enamelled cup
Whose soft and purple border, scarcely blown,
Budded beneath their touch, and trembled to their tone.

The fringed branches of the swinging pines
Closed o'er my path ; a darkness in the sky,
That barred its dappled vault with rugged lines,
And silver network,*—interwoven signs

* The white mosses on the meleze, when the tree is very old, are singularly beautiful, resembling frost-work of silver.

Of dateless age and deathless infancy ;
Then through their aisles a motion and a brightness
Kindled and shook—the weight of shade they bore
On their broad arms, was lifted by the lightness
Of a soft, shuddering wind, and what they wore
Of jewelled dew, was strewed about the forest floor.
That thrill of gushing wind and glittering rain
Onward amid the woodland hollows went,
And bade by turns the drooping boughs complain
O'er the brown earth, that drank in lightless stain
The beauty of their burning ornament ;
And then the roar of an enormous river
Came on the intermittent air uplifted,
Broken with haste, I saw its sharp waves shiver,
And its wild weight in white disorder drifted,
Where by its beaten shore the rocks lay heaped and rifted.

But yet unshattered, from an azure arch*
Came forth the nodding waters, wave by wave,

* Source of the Arveron.

In silver lines of modulated march,
 Through a broad desert, which the frost-winds parch
 Like fire, and the resounding ice-falls pave
 With pallid ruin—wastes of rock—that share
 Earth's calm and ocean's fruitlessness.*—Undone
 The work of ages lies,—through whose despair
 Their swift procession dancing in the sun,
 The white and whirling waves pass mocking one by one.

And with their voice—unquiet melody—
 Is filled the hollow of their mighty portal,
 As shells are with remembrance of the sea ;
 So might the eternal arch of Eden be
 With angels' wail for those whose crowns immortal
 The grave-dust dimmed in passing. There are here,
 With azure wings, and scymitars of fire,
 Forms as of Heaven, to guard the gate, and rear
 Their burning arms afar,—a boundless choir
 Beneath the sacred shafts of many a mountain spire.

* παρὰ τὴν ἁλὸς ἀτρυγέτοιο.—ΙΛΙΑΔ. Α'

Countless as clouds, dome, prism, and pyramid

Pierced through the mist of morning scarce withdrawn,

Signing the gloom like beacon fires, half hid

By storm—part quenched in billows—or forbid

Their function by the fullness of the dawn :

And melting mists and threads of purple rain

Fretted the fair sky where the east was red,

Gliding like ghosts along the voiceless plain,

In rainbow hues around its coldness shed,

Like thoughts of loving hearts that haunt about the dead.

And over these, as pure as if the breath

Of God had called them newly into light,

Free from all stamp of sin, or shade of death,

With which the old creation travaileth,

Rose the white mountains, through the infinite

Of the calm, concave heaven ; inly bright

With lustre everlasting and intense,

Serene and universal as the night,

But yet more solemn with pervading sense

Of the deep stillness of omnipotence.

Deep stillness ! for the throbs of human thought,
Count not the lonely night that pauses here,
And the white arch of morning findeth not
By chasm or alp, a spirit, or a spot,
Its call can waken, or its beams can cheer :
There are no eyes to watch, no lips to meet
Its messages with prayer—no matin bell
Touches the delicate air with summons sweet ;—
That smoke was of the avalanche ;* that knell
Came from a tower of ice that into fragments fell.

Ah ! why should that be comfortless—why cold,
Which is so near to Heaven ? The lowly earth
Out of the blackness of its charnel mould
Feeds its fresh life, and lights its banks with gold ;
But these proud summits, in eternal dearth,
Whose solitudes nor mourning know, nor mirth,

* The vapor or dust of dry snow which rises after the fall of a large avalanche, sometimes looks in the distance not unlike the smoke of a village.

Rise passionless and pure, but all unblest :

Corruption—must it root the brightest birth ?

And is the life that bears its fruitage best,

One neither of supremacy nor rest ?

THE OLD SEAMAN.

I.

You ask me why mine eyes are bent
So darkly on the sea,
While others watch the azure hills
That lengthen on the lee.

II.

The azure hills—they soothe the sight
That fails along the foam ;
And those may hail their nearing height
Who there have hope, or home.

III.

But I a loveless path have trod—
A beaconless career ;
My hope hath long been all with God,
And all my home is—here.

IV.

The deep by day, the heaven by night,
Roll onward swift and dark ;
Nor leave my soul the dove's delight,
Of olive branch, or ark.

V.

For more than gale, or gulf, or sand,
I've proved that there may be
Worse treachery on the steadfast land,
Than variable sea.

VI.

A danger worse than bay or beach—
A falsehood more unkind—
The treachery of a governed speech,
And an ungoverned mind.

VII.

The treachery of the deadly mart
Where human souls are sold ;
The treachery of the hollow heart
That crumbles as we hold.

VIII.

Those holy hills and quiet lakes—

Ah ! wherefore should I find

This weary fever-fit, that shakes

Their image in my mind.

IX.

The memory of a streamlet's din,

Through meadows daisy-drest—

Another might be glad therein,

And yet I cannot rest.

X.

I cannot rest unless it be

Beneath the churchyard yew ;

But God, I think, hath yet for me

More earthly work to do.

XI.

And therefore with a quiet will,

I breathe the ocean air,

And bless the voice that calls me still

To wander and to bear.

XII.

Let others seek their native sod,
Who there have hearts to cheer ;
My soul hath long been given to God,
And all my home is—here.

THE ALPS.

SEEN FROM MARENGO.

THE glory of a cloud—without its wane ;
The stillness of the earth—but not its gloom ;
The loveliness of life—without its pain ;
The peace—but not the hunger of the tomb !
Ye Pyramids of God ! around whose bases
The sea foams noteless in his narrow cup ;
And the unseen movements of the earth send up
A murmur which your lulling snow effaces
Like the deer's footsteps. Thrones imperishable !
About whose adamant steps the breath
Of dying generations vanisheth,
Less cognizable than clouds ; and dynasties,
Less glorious and more feeble than the array
Of your frail glaciers, unregarded rise,
Totter and vanish. In the uncounted day,

When earth shall tremble as the trump unwraps

 Their sheets of slumber from the crumbling dead,

And the quick, thirsty fire of judgment laps

 The loud sea from the hollow of his bed—

Shall not your God spare *you*, to whom He gave

 No share nor shadow of man's crime, or fate ;

 Nothing to render, nor to expiate ;

Untainted by his life—untrusted with his grave ?

WRITTEN AMONG THE BASSES ALPS.

[It is not among mountain scenery that human intellect usually takes its finest temper, or receives its highest development; but it is at least there that we find a consistent energy of mind and body, compelled by severer character of agencies to be resisted and hardships to be endured; and it is there that we must seek for the last remnants of patriarchal simplicity and patriotic affection—the few rock fragments of manly character that are yet free from the lichenous stain of over-civilization. It must always, therefore, be with peculiar pain that we find, as in the district to which the following verses allude, the savageness and seclusion of mountain life, without its force and faithfulness; and all the indolence and sensuality of the most debased cities of Europe, without the polish to disguise, the temptation to excuse, or the softness of natural scenery to harmonize with them.]

“Why stand ye here all the day idle?”

HAVE you in heaven no hope—on earth no care—

No foe in hell—ye things of sty and stall,

That congregate like flies, and make the air

Rank with your fevered sloth—that hourly call

The sun, which should your servant be, to bear

Dread witness on you, with uncounted wane

And unregarded rays, from peak to peak

Of piny-gnomoned mountain moved in vain ?

Behold, the very shadows that ye seek

For slumber, write along the wasted wall

Your condemnation. They forget not, they,

Their ordered function and determined fall,

Nor useless perish. But *you* count your day

By sins, and write your difference from clay

In bonds you break and laws you disobey.

God ! who hast given the rocks their fortitude,

The sap unto the forests, and their food

And vigor to the busy tenantry

Of happy soulless things that wait on Thee,

Hast Thou no blessing where Thou gav'st Thy blood ?

Wilt Thou not make Thy fair creation whole ?

Behold and visit this Thy vine for good—

Breathe in this human dust its living soul.

THE GLACIER.

THE mountains have a peace which none disturb—

The stars and clouds a course which none restrain—

The wild sea-waves rejoice without a curb,

And rest without a passion ; but the chain

Of Death, upon this ghastly cliff and chasm

Is broken evermore, to bind again,

Nor lulls nor looses. Hark ! a voice of pain

Suddenly silenced ;—a quick passing spasm,

That startles rest, but grants not liberty,—

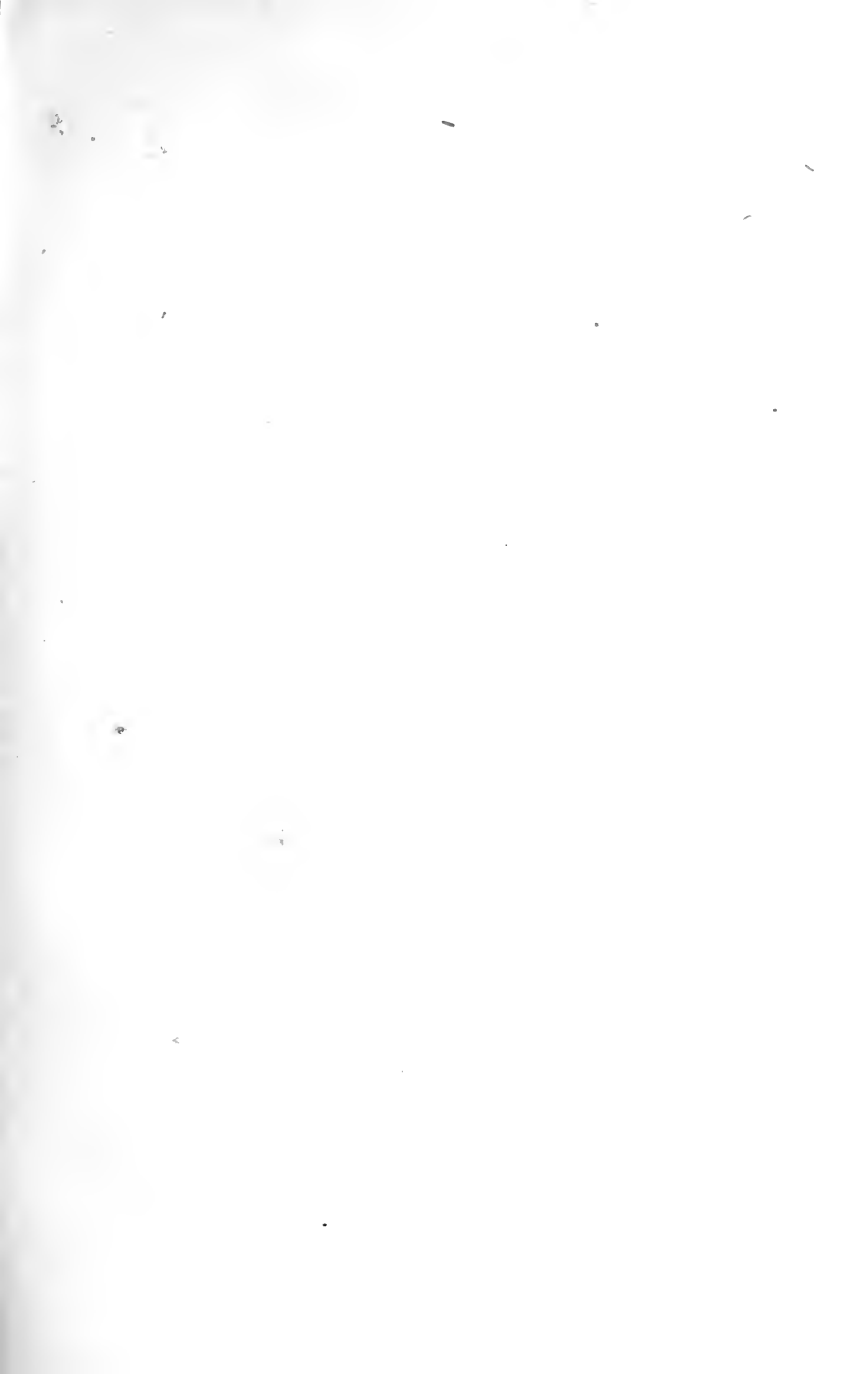
A shudder, or a struggle, or a cry—

And then sepulchral stillness. Look on us,

God ! who hast given these hills their place of pride,

If Death's captivity be sleepless thus,

For those who sink to it unsanctified.





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